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DISCERNING OUR POSTURE AND IMAGINATION:
A DELPHI STUDY OF LEADERS IN THE NORTHWEST WASHINGTON SYNOD
OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

BY
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A Written Project submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I began the Post-Master's Certificate of Pastoral Leadership program at the Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry (STM) in 2016 thinking that the one-year certificate program would suffice for the continuing education I was seeking. However, after being exposed to the richness of offerings at STM, the outstanding faculty, and the nudging, persistent questions about pastoral and lay leadership in the Lutheran church, I discerned that I had to keep searching and learning. I changed my course of study to the Doctor of Ministry program, culminating with this project.

I was especially guided in this decision by my doctoral advisor and project committee chair, Dr. Sharon Henderson Callahan, who offered me support, wisdom, and grace beyond measure. I count myself doubly blessed as I was the recipient of her guidance just prior to her retiring as Director of the Doctor of Ministry program at STM. Dr. Callahan's ecumenical and generous spirit, her ability to communicate in words and by her own modeling of the essence of leadership, and her strong and gentle manner of challenging her students were surely the reasons my course of study and this project came to fruition.

I am also deeply grateful to Dr. Terri Elton and Rev. Dr. David Hahn, committee members for this project, but even more so, mentors for me in the area of church leadership. I am honored by their participation in this journey. They pushed me to broaden my understanding of leadership, mission, and adaptive change. Though I may not have explored every nook and cranny they suggested, and any omissions or errors in this project are mine alone, their perspectives and guidance helped strengthen my project and interest in religious leadership.

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DEDICATION

To Christ Lutheran Church, for the support of your pastor.

To my parents, Rod and Sharie, for modeling and instilling in me, alongside the Holy Spirit, the desire and ability to lead.

To Michael, whose partnership is my life's greatest gift.

And, especially, to Tae—my deepest hope for the future.

ABSTRACT

DISCERNING OUR POSTURE AND IMAGINATION: A DELPHI STUDY OF LEADERS IN THE NORTHWEST WASHINGTON SYNOD OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

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This qualitative research engaged clergy and lay leaders from the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to determine the posture and imagination necessary for leaders navigating the uncharted future of the Lutheran church in the Northwest. Because the future of the church is volatile and complex, this study attempted to identify how clergy and lay leaders should be postured and what imagination they must possess to face unknown future adaptive challenges.

This study was rooted in grounded theory and utilized a Delphi method to achieve consensus regarding approaches to leadership. The first of two iterative surveys asked clergy and lay leaders about the posture and imagination needed to lead the Lutheran church in the Northwest in the next five years. A second survey asked the same participants to rate the importance of the coded responses from the first survey, the second survey achieving consensus on each of the thirty named postures and imagination.

The theological frameworks of posture, imagination, transformation, and vocation, as well as the emerging future illustrated in C. Otto Scharmer's *Theory U*, guided the purpose of this study, with research findings addressed through these theological lenses. The result is a list of nine concluding recommendations for clergy and lay leaders of the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington, for their consideration over the next five years.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Over the past three decades, numerous military reports and subsequent leadership management writings have posited that the world is increasing in “volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity,” or VUCA for short (The United States Army War College 2018; Garvey Berger and Johnston 2015). Though originally intended for a military audience, leaders of religious communities—often exasperated—find familiarity with such a proposition. The sacred and secular world in which clergy and lay leaders operate is changing so rapidly, and the future is so unpredictable, it often leaves leaders questioning how to approach ministry in the first place. As the church undergoes yet another reformation (Tickle 2008, 2012), there are fewer clear answers as to how religious leaders should lead.

The following is an attempt to frame the overarching challenge for church leaders as one of “posture” and “imagination.” How leaders are *postured* for ministry, and what kind of *imagination* they possess, has significant bearing on how they minister in response to the rise of VUCA in the world as well as the church.

Statement of the Problem

The future of the Western Christian church in the United States is uncharted territory. As Tod Bolsinger illustrates, leading the church in this post-Christian age is like the Lewis and Clark expedition reaching the Rocky Mountains and grasping the fact that their canoes couldn’t be used any farther (Bolsinger 2015). The tools, perspectives, and education for leadership clergy and laity have been using are often no longer effective.

What were once considered “best practices” for ministry are no longer entirely relevant across diverse geographic, social, or economic contexts, and cannot help navigate complex environments. Church leaders question whether long-range planning can even be attempted past one or two years. In the ongoing reformation of the church, this researcher is curious what approaches to leadership—not what program, practice, or particular theology—will enable the church to thrive in a post-Christian, pluralistic, multi-ethnic age.

Many authors offer excellent clues to the approach of leadership necessary for this uncharted territory: transformational rather than transactional leadership (Burns 1978), a focus on adaptive rather than technical change (Heifetz and Linsky 2002), a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will (Collins 2005), the practice of “presencing” (Scharmer 2016; Scharmer and Kaufer 2013), the practices of dwelling in the Word and in the world to account for God’s agency (Hahn 2014; Rooms and Keifert 2014), follower satisfaction and commitment (Bass and Riggio 2006), and a focus on mission, purpose, and “BHAGs: Big Hairy Audacious Goals” (Collins 2005; Bolsinger 2015). Each of these writings explores an important dimension of leading in complex times. What this researcher is interested in, and what is emphasized in this study, is the particular posture and imagination needed by both clergy and lay leaders as they face a future with adaptive challenges for which there are no clear or easy answers. Additionally, this researcher wonders if there is a difference between the approaches of clergy versus that of laity necessary to face this uncharted future in the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to discover the leadership postures and imagination of both clergy and laity that create the capacity to participate with God in facing unknown adaptive challenges in a complex future and across diverse ministerial contexts in the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). If the vitality of God's future church is our common goal, the posture and imagination of its leaders could either help or hinder that objective. In the synod many clergy and lay leaders are already engaged in leadership that reflects the characteristics and practices noted above. This researcher hopes to use the expertise of those already finding a way forward in this uncharted territory to highlight effective leadership approaches for the Lutheran church in the not-too-distant future.

Research Questions and Methods

The questions in this research endeavor proposed to both clergy and laity in the Northwest Washington Synod of the ELCA were:

1. What is the posture needed for clergy to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?
2. What is the imagination needed for clergy to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?
3. What is the posture needed for lay leaders to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?
4. What is the imagination needed for lay leaders to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?

The aim of the questions was to provide a rich understanding of what leaders in the Northwest, adept at adaptive change, believe is necessary to lead in the face of unknown challenges and potential changes in the church's future.

The first of two iterative Delphi surveys with these questions was distributed electronically to eighteen clergy and eleven lay potential respondents. The results of the Delphi 1 survey consisted of responses from eleven clergy and eight lay leaders who consented to the research. The results were coded into summative, overarching postures and imagination which were then sent back to the same respondents for the Delphi 2 survey, to query the importance of each named posture and imagination. The Delphi 2 findings from eleven clergy and five lay leader participants were ranked by highest mean and lowest standard deviation. These results highlighted conclusions and recommendations regarding the posture and imagination needed for the future work of both clergy and lay leaders within the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington.

Importance of the Study

J. Russell Crabtree distinguishes pathways to vitality for ELCA congregations in his 2016 study examining the “organizational intelligence” of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Qualities of transformational Lutheran churches, the aspirations and financial giving of ELCA members, and pastoral changes are carefully addressed in his research and reflection. In addition, the ELCA's outstanding Congregational Vitality Project (www.congregationalvitalityproject.com) led by Linda Bobbitt, outlines the span of congregations in terms of their life-changing relationships with God, one another, and their community. The project focuses on nine domains impacting a congregation's vitality: God's presence, mission/purpose, leadership (skills, personality, and overall

health of leaders), relationships, attitudes/culture, local contexts, resources, governance/administration, and programs. The researcher's own synod supports an excellent initiative called "Living Local" (www.livinglocalnw.com), led by David Hahn, that guides congregations through an 18-month process of discernment to expand connections to God and neighbor in order to join in what God is doing beyond church walls.

While organizational intelligence, the nine domains of a congregation's vitality and the mindset of living local are vitally important, the posture and imagination of clergy and laity are also crucial for facing a church future that will undoubtedly look different than the present. The research in this study aspires to work alongside Crabtree, Bobbit, Hahn, and others, with a particular focus on the leadership posture and imagination of clergy and lay leaders as congregations and ministries move into an unknown future.

Background and Role of the Researcher

I pastor a mid-sized Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregation in the northwest corner of Washington State. In many ways our congregation is thriving: we have just completed a \$1.3 million building remodel and expansion, we have had growth in membership over the past several years, and the community in which we are located is slated to grow by a third in the next two decades. Yet there is a cloud of unknowing that lies ahead of us. Worship attendance is waning. What worked in the past with regard to program and practice, no longer feels sustainable. As a clergyperson with eighteen years' experience, I sense I am detached in years from my seminary training and knowledge of current leadership trends for clergy and laity. I

am uncertain how to address the as yet unknown adaptive challenges which surely lie ahead, both in terms of how to posture myself as a leader, as well as the imagination necessary for both clergy and laity to discern God’s direction in leading a church with an undetermined future.

Thankfully, I do not feel alone. Numerous colleagues and authors echo this uncertainty in a society in which the fastest growing faith tradition is “none,” and in a church which is undergoing yet another radical reformation (Bolsinger 2015; Drescher 2016; O’Connell Killen and Silk 2004; Tickle 2008, 2012). Such a context carries with it the hazard that “everyone—including and perhaps particularly those in positions of authority—is vulnerable to being merely swept up in a dance of unexamined assumptions and blind to the larger patterns of which we are a part” (Daloz Parks 2005, 52). Because communities of faith are so contextual, both how leaders posture themselves and how they nurture their capacity for imagination, have substantial bearing on how they will be able to face adaptive challenges in their context.

Limitations and Delimitations

The delimitations of this study confined the research solely to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, specifically to the Northwest Washington Synod of the ELCA. The synod encompasses the geographical area from just south of Seattle to the Canadian border, and east to the Cascade foothills. It includes 116 congregations and ministries and 157 rostered leaders (clergy and deacons). The experts who participated in this research have shown a desire and leadership capacity for adaptive and organizational change in the church. Eleven clergy recommended by the bishop of the Northwest

Washington Synod of the ELCA, and eight lay leaders recommended by their respective pastors, ultimately participated in the study.

Because the previously referenced research and writing on leadership has already helpfully addressed issues such as leadership competencies and practices, the research here focuses solely on the posture and imagination of leaders. This study also omits focusing intentionally on particular adaptive challenges facing the current or future church.

Adaptive Challenges

“Adaptive challenges” are described by Ronald A. Heifitz and Marty Linsky as those which cannot be solved by authoritative expertise or technical means. They are referred to as such because they are not resolved by current knowledge and resources, but rather “require experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments from numerous places in the organization or community” (Heifitz and Linsky 2002, 13). Heifitz and Linsky assert that changing attitudes, values, and behaviors, and learning new ways of operating are necessary for addressing such challenges.

However, clergy and lay leaders do not always know what experiments, discoveries, and learnings may be necessary, nor how to change their own or others’ attitudes, values, and behaviors. In *Simple Habits for Complex Times: Powerful Practices for Leaders*, Jennifer Garvey Berger and Keith Johnston (2015) illustrate well the experience of clergy and lay leaders:

Because there’s no way of knowing what’s next (that’s the uncertainty and volatility part), we are always walking forward with our hands in the dark, waiting to bump into things. And because things are changing, we have lost much of the ability to predict what will happen next from what has happened before, to pull out the memories from other dark rooms we have bumped through in the past. (11)

Due to Lutheranism's 500-year history and the multi-decade history of most Lutheran congregations and ministries in the Northwest Washington Synod, it is likely the ways we have "bumped through" in the past are deeply ingrained in both clergy and lay leaders' leadership repertoire. And, because most problems come bundled (Garvey Berger and Johnston 2015) and most problems in religious arenas require an adaptive capacity (Bolsinger 2015), the ability to name and predict how to "bump through" every adaptive challenge facing the current or future church is inconceivable.

It seems that there is an important step to effectuating adaptive change that this researcher believes is needed before naming or facing particular adaptive challenges, no matter what they are. How leaders posture themselves toward God and the church in the face of that for which they do not have answers, and how they participate with God in creating imagination in the face of what they do not know, is a preliminary and ongoing step in the approaches necessary for leadership in the future Lutheran church of Northwest Washington.

Therefore, after much reflection on the focus and delimitations of the study, this researcher chose not to address particular adaptive challenges facing the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington. Though several were named in the responses of survey participants, the researcher sought data that could ultimately inform clergy and lay leaders about what kind of posture and imagination they would need to face any adaptive challenge. Essentially, this study defines what needs to happen as adaptive challenges are faced: leaders must be postured a certain way and have a particular kind of imagination in order to participate with God in a future in which adaptive challenges will likely only increase.

Definition of Terms

Posture: The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2019) defines “posture” as “(1) the position or bearing of the body whether characteristic or assumed for a special purpose... (2) the state or condition at any given time with respect to capability... (3) a conscious mental or outward behavioral attitude.” This researcher is interested in how all three definitions relate to leadership in the church: (1) how the body *of church leaders* must be positioned toward God and others for ministry in the next five years; (2) what state or condition of capability clergy and lay leaders must possess for leading the church in the next five years, and (3) what mental or outward behavioral attitude leaders must hold for leading the church in the next five years.

Imagination: Imagination is the capacity to form new thoughts and picture something that does not currently exist. It is the ability to create concepts with which the imaginer does not yet have experience, of which they do not yet fully understand: “to form a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses” (Perdue 2003, 1). In querying about imagination for this study, this researcher was not necessarily seeking responses outlining specific programs or ideas on leading the church of the future in the Northwest Washington Synod. Rather, the researcher was exploring thoughts about how new ideas or concepts for ministry can be created in the first place, and how God’s imagination can transform our own.

In the Delphi surveys, posture and imagination were described in these ways. However, the researcher was also curious how survey respondents interpreted “posture” and “imagination” on their own. The data they supplied helped broaden the concept of

posture and imagination, providing a richer understanding of what is necessary for leadership in the future of the synod.

Outline of Chapters

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 explores the four theological concepts that guided the study: posture, imagination, transformation, and vocation. The second chapter also includes an overview of the emerging future concept as defined in C. Otto Scharmer's (2016) *Theory U* and its usefulness in this research. Chapter 3 describes the grounded theory methodology and Delphi method utilized for this study, and Chapter 4 explores the findings from the two Delphi surveys. Chapter 5 offers conclusions and recommendations of leadership approaches for clergy and lay leaders in the future Lutheran church in Northwest Washington.

Summary

This introduction illustrated the complex and ambiguous future facing the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington. Clues to the approach of leadership by clergy and laity needed for such a future church was described, as was the background and interest of the researcher in this study. The purpose and initial research questions of the study were offered and previous research cited. Additionally, the context, limits, and delimitations of the study were described, as well as the decision of the researcher to omit a focus on particular adaptive challenges currently facing the church.

What follows is an explication of the theological foundations informing the purpose of this study. The qualitative methodology of the research is then described, and the Delphi method used to conduct the research and coding process defined. The hope is that the resulting discoveries regarding approaches to leadership will position church

leaders, researcher included, to face the adaptive challenges that lie on the horizon of the church's future.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

The four theological themes of posture, imagination, transformation, and vocation guided the purpose, research, and conclusions for this project focusing on the leadership approaches of clergy and laity for an uncertain church future. This chapter explores both the postures of God's people and of Jesus, as illustrated in scripture, and reflects on the impact of the postures exhibited by worship and congregational leadership. The concept of imagination is defined and explored within a theological, biblical, and liturgical context. Transformation and transformational leadership are defined, and a Lutheran theology of vocation is affirmed as a leadership touchstone for an uncertain future. The chapter also includes a reflection on leading in the emerging future using Otto Scharmer's *Theory U* as a helpful image and guide. Each of these frameworks provide a helpful lens through which to view the findings from the Delphi study delineated in the concluding chapter.

Posture

The book of 2 Chronicles recounts the prayer of King Jehoshaphat of Judah as he anticipated an attack by the Moabites, Ammonites, and some Meunites. Jehoshaphat prayed to the Lord, "For we are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." Following his prayer, a prophet arose from those assembled, saying, "This battle is not for you to fight; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem." And in that instant, all the armies coming against Judah destroyed one

another, and the inhabitants of Judah acquired the plunder of the fallen armies (2 Chr 20:1-30).

Despite its violent context, this story illustrates the importance of “posture” when the future is unknown and fearful. When “we do not know what to do” we are cognizant of where our eyes *go*; we pay attention to how we stand. God cares about how we are postured. According to this biblical narrative, when we are postured toward God—in trust, in hope, in action—we receive transformation and gifts in abundance, and are open and able to participate with God, even when we do not know what to do.

Numerous biblical stories illustrate the importance of humans’ posture toward God: Moses removing his sandals when he approached the burning bush, Elizabeth hugging a pregnant Mary, the wise men kneeling at the manger, Mary sitting before Jesus and wiping his perfumed feet with her hair. How humans are postured toward God and toward the future God is creating, has bearing on our ability to lead as God’s agents of change.

Perhaps even more important than the posture of humans toward God, however, is the posture of Jesus toward the world as portrayed in Philippians 2: Jesus “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-7). His self-emptied and humbled posture on the cross speaks to the posture humans are freed to have toward one another: “If God loves us in Christ, so that God identifies with us relationally in a posture of humility, then we are to share this same love with our neighbors” (Van Gelder and Zscheile 2011, 114). Jesus’ posture informs our own posture.

Even the bodily postures of clergy and laity in leading worship and prayer symbolize the effect of one's positioning on the whole people of God. In *The Worshipping Body: The Art of Leading Worship*, Kimberly Bracken Long maintains that a "rooted and free" posture of the leaders' eyes, ears, lips, hands, feet, and heart ensures worshippers' communion with God and receiving God's presence in and with the world (Bracken Long 2009). The exhortation in receiving the Eucharist to "be what you see, receive what you are," calls on worshippers to come with open hands to receive God and then to be that bread for others in the world. Cultivating physical engagement along with intellectual and spiritual engagement in worship, creates greater space for worshippers to meet God and move with God from the sanctuary into the world. And, as Jane Vennard illustrates in *Praying with Body and Soul*, the body as a tool of prayer deepens one's relationship with God and God's call to service, justice, and care for the earth (Vennard 1998).

The emotional posture of leaders also determines their ability to shepherd in the uncharted, and sometimes conflicted, territory of the church: "The stance of a self-differentiated, non-anxious, transforming leader is to maintain caring relationships with the people, even while expressing a non-reactive point of view regarding the issues facing the congregation" (Cook Everist and Nesson 2008, 180). Leadership experts Ronald Heifitz and Marty Linsky agree, illustrating a posture of "holding steady" to describe the non-anxious presence of leaders, especially when receiving the anger of others: "If you can hold steady long enough, remaining respectful of their pains and defending your perspective without feeling you must defend yourself, you may find that in the ensuing calm, relationships become stronger" (Heifitz and Linsky 2002, 145). It is the posture of

openness that Heifitz and Linsky believe produces effective leadership even in a challenging context:

A sacred heart means that you may feel tortured and betrayed, powerless and hopeless, and yet stay open. It's the capacity to encompass the entire range of your human experience without hardening or closing yourself. It means that even in the midst of disappointment or defeat, you remain connected to people and to the sources of your most profound purposes. (Heifitz and Linsky 2002, 230)

How clergy and lay leaders position themselves for ministry has deep implications, reaching beyond themselves to their wider communities. In his exposition on community, Peter Block (2009) asserts, “to create a more positive and connected future for our communities, we must be willing to trade their problems for their possibilities” (4). He describes “shifting the context” of individuals and whole communities, from retribution to restoration, choosing depth over speed, and relatedness over scale to transform communities. He asserts that the task of leaders is to create a context that nurtures an alternative future and convene conversations that move a community toward shared ownership of that future (Block 2009). His very language, though not specifically theological, indicates how important posture becomes for religious leaders to achieve transformation. Leaders must trade, shift, choose depth and relatedness, create, and convene. These “posture words” paint a picture of how leaders position themselves for the building of community in a changing culture and church.

Imagination

Imagination is the capacity to form new thoughts and picture something that does not currently exist. It is the ability to create concepts with which the imaginer does not yet have experience, or which they do not fully understand; “to form a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses” (Perdue 2003, 1). In theological terms,

imagination is the primary vehicle in which God's alternative vision for the world is realized. Imagination comes from God's Spirit: "Imagination is not the property of autonomous individuals. Rather, it is one of the ways in which the Holy Spirit moves within and among us to lead us into God's missional activity in the world" (Van Gelder and Zscheile 2011, 148). Imagination leads God's people into new ways of knowing and acting, even "beyond the ordinary and the reasonable" (Brueggemann 2018, xxix).

Walter Brueggemann describes imagination as a legitimate way of knowing and a theological force that creates the capacity for a new and different future. In prophetic biblical literature, as well as in current prophetic ministry, the imaginations of prophets "nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us" (Brueggemann 2018, 3). Brueggemann asserts that it is the very imagination of God that drives the prophet's imagination to announce and enact a different future:

Our culture is competent to implement almost anything and to imagine almost nothing....It is the vocation of the prophet to keep alive the ministry of imagination, to keep on conjuring and proposing futures alternative to the single one the king wants to urge as the only thinkable one. (2018, 40)

Similarly, John Paul Lederach asserts that imagination, particularly moral imagination, recognizes that the challenges of the real world can be countered by something new: "In reference to peace-building, this is the capacity to imagine and generate constructive responses and initiatives that, while rooted in the day-to-day challenges of violence, transcend and ultimately break the grips of those destructive patterns and cycles" (Lederach 2005, 29). Lederach, like Brueggemann, believes that imagination is the tool that transforms "what is" to enact God's vision of "what can be."

With regard to the church, Gordon Lathrop proposed that the imagination of clergy is what helps bring a congregation face-to-face with God's grace:

Imagination can consider the strangeness of the texts, the otherness and surprise of the lives of the people who will assemble, the manifold variety of both the wretchedness and the blessedness of the world, and the resonances of meaning that will occur as Word and Sacrament are set side by side in this present world. Indeed, I need imagination and attention to reflect on how, by the power of the Spirit, the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ gather all these things into the mercy of God, proposing justice and love. (Lathrop 2006, 56)

Imagination is also tied to how the church postures and orients itself when it imagines "how its bread and forgiveness can hold us into faith and hope and orient us in a needy, beloved world" (Lathrop 2006, 35). Lathrop argues that it is imagination that is able to hold ambiguity and embrace the mystery of God's grace so the congregation is engaged with God in worship and the world.

Transformation

In their book *Transforming Leadership: New Vision for a Church in Mission*, Norma Cook Everist and Craig Nesson describe leadership as: "a communal activity of people involved in God's mission asking the question about who God is and what God is intending to do in the world" (Cook Everist and Nesson 2008, vii). The task of this type of leadership is wholly about transformation: transformation of the leaders themselves, their growing capacity for transformational leadership, the church becoming a transformational body, and all members of the church being transformed for daily ministry. Transformational leadership in the church empowers people to participate in ministry and mission, remember and claim their true identity as the people of God in Christ Jesus, and move outward in that identity as the body of Christ sent in mission (Cook Everist and Nesson 2008). This understanding of leadership is especially important

given the tendency of congregations and other religious communities to return, in systems theory language, to homeostasis. For the future of the church to be vital and missional, especially in this post-Christian age, transformational leadership offers a release from the patterns of homeostasis and instead supports a burgeoning capacity for imagination.

Though they are not theologians, Bernard Bass and Ronald Riggio describe the power of transformational leadership for organizations, including the church.

Transformational leaders stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity (Bass and Riggio 2006). The components of transformational leadership include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Transformational leaders instill pride in followers, specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose, articulate a compelling vision of the future, seek differing perspectives when solving problems, and spend time teaching and coaching (Bass and Riggio 2006). The result of transformational leadership is life-giving relationships that effectuate change and progress.

The very crux of the Christian faith is predicated on transformation: Jesus transformed the lives of those whom he taught, healed, and fed; his journey from death to resurrection transformed his body and ministry, which then transformed the lives of centuries of Christ-followers. Jesus was the ultimate transformational leader. As an inspiring leader, he drew untold numbers of followers, then instilled in them their own sense of leadership. When Jesus' disciples wanted to send the crowd of thousands away because there was not enough food, Jesus insisted, no, "you give them something to eat"

(Mt 14:16, Mk 6:37, Lk 9:13). Jesus did what Cook Everist and Nesson cite as true leadership: asking who God is and what God is intending to do in the world. Jesus guided others toward postures that engendered their own transformation and led them to live out their vocation as Christ-followers who continued the work of transformation in the world. By virtue of being a transformed people, Christians live out of a transformed existence.

It might seem like the work of transformation for both clergy and laity in the church today would be obvious and welcomed, after all:

God's dream for the world is about the redemption of all creation, not just individuals getting into heaven; it is about the restoration of life as God intended it to be; it is about realigning life around God and God's ways. (Roxburgh and Boren 2009, 101-102)

The difficulty with transformation, however, is that it demands that systems, religious systems included, experiment and allow for freedom, lest they remain stagnant or even die. As Margaret Wheatley notes in *Leadership and the New Science*, “in classical thermodynamics, equilibrium is the end state in the evolution of closed systems, the point at which the system has exhausted all of its capacity for change, done its work, and dissipated its productive capacity into useless entropy” (Wheatley 1999, 76). The church often finds itself at this bifurcation point, standing at the crossroads between death and transformation. And yet the church does this to itself—“People are surprised, becoming defensive and reactive, when conflict erupts in the church. Mired intimidation and veiled threats, we learn and teach skills of manipulation. We kill one another nicely” (Cook Everist 2002, 55).

This reality has major implications for leaders in the church: leaders can create the conditions for transformation to flourish or fail. Wheatley contends that

transformation is possible in a chaotic system when leaders engender clear centers rather than impose restraints:

In organizations, if people are free to make their own decisions, guided by a clear organizational identity for them to reference, the whole system develops greater coherence and strength.... The leader's role is not to make sure that people know exactly what to do and when to do it. Instead, leaders need to ensure that there is strong and evolving clarity about who the organization is. (Wheatley 1999, 87, 131)

Wheatley affirms that for transformation to occur, in themselves and in the church, leaders must be postured toward freedom and a clear sense of identity for both themselves and the organizations they serve.

Such an approach is echoed in Jennifer Garvey Berger and Keith Johnston's (2015) *Simple Habits for Complex Times: Powerful Practices for Leaders*. The authors contend that a leader in a complex world "needs a vision that is directional without imposing too much (or too little) constraint on people. And a leader needs a strategy that is clear enough for new actions but open enough to allow the unexpected to emerge" (87). Thus, even the process of visioning and strategizing requires transformation and ongoing evolution. Additional insights from Garvey Berger and Johnston are offered in Chapter 5, as findings from the Delphi surveys are measured against the authors' understandings of and proposals for a complex world.

Vocation

This researcher practices a Lutheran tradition rich in a theology of vocation. Martin Luther claimed that both clergy and laity belong to "the priesthood of all believers," which, according to Paul Althaus, has less to do with an individual, unmediated relationship between the believer and God and more to do with the

community created by believers: we are all priests for one another and for the world (Althaus 1966).

The baptismal liturgies in the ELCA's *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* book point to this aspect of vocation in baptismal formation. Parents bringing their children for baptism are entrusted with the responsibility of accompanying them to Christian worship and providing for their instruction in the word of God, "so that your children may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace." They affirm their baptism promise, along with other intentions: "to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 2006, 228).

The liturgies for ordination and consecration in the ELCA also begin with a pronouncement about baptismal vocation: "All baptized Christians are called to share in Christ's ministry of love and service in the world, to the glory of God and for the sake of the human family and the whole creation." Ordained ministers then receive this commission: "According to apostolic usage you are now to be entrusted with the office of word and sacrament in the one holy catholic church by the laying on of hands and by prayer" (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America n.d., "Occasional Services for the Assembly, Ordination"), and consecrated deacons the following:

You have been called as a minister of word and service to give leadership in the church's mission to proclaim the gospel through word and deed. You are now to be entrusted with this ministry by the laying on of hands and by prayer. (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America n.d., "Occasional Services for the Assembly, Consecration to the Ministry of Word and Service [2017]")

In its *Candidacy Manual* for rostered leaders (clergy and deacons), the ELCA describes characteristics and competencies of missional leadership in which clergy and deacons live out their priesthood granted in baptism, including:

- Having capacity to engage people and lead them toward active participation in God’s mission in the world;
- Showing people the crucified Christ through word and deed that enables them to envision what God is doing in the world and in their lives;
- Willingness to serve, risk, and sacrifice for the sake of God’s mission, including an ability to identify and lead in exposing the principalities and powers operative in a given context;
- Cultivating Christian community, discipleship, leadership formation, and the practice of reconciliation of differences;
- Speaking publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God’s love for the world.

The ultimate principle of the vocation of ordained and consecrated leaders is that “we are church for the sake of the world” (ELCA 2016, 22-25). Such a vocation is meant to move followers, not only in deeper communion with God, but also equip and embolden them to bring about the justice and peace for which God calls.

Numerous hymns from Lutheran hymnody also illustrate the vocation of service, justice, and peace of those who are baptized, both clergy and laity. Such hymnal examples are found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (2006): in verse two of the hymn, “Arise, Your Light Has Come!”—“Arise, your light has come! Fling wide the prison

door; bind up the brokenhearted ones and comfort those who mourn” (2006, 314), and in verse two of the hymn, “For the Fruit of All Creation”:

In the just reward of labor, God’s will is done. In the help we give our neighbor,
God’s will is done. In our worldwide task of caring for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvest we are sharing, God’s will is done. (679)

Lastly, it is found in the second verse of the hymn, “Rise Up, O Saints of God!”—“Speak out, O saints of God! Despair engulfs earth’s frame; as heirs of God’s baptismal grace, the word of hope proclaim” (669).

In his 1983 article, “Luther on Vocation”, Marc Kolden exemplifies Luther’s understanding of vocation as well as its goal:

Just as God’s redemptive act in becoming incarnate affirms that salvation is not an escape from creation but a restoration and fulfillment of it, so also the Christian life will not be an escape from creaturely life but a calling to it. The call to follow Christ leads not to any religious vocation removed from daily life, but instead it transforms the attitude and understanding one has of the situation in which one already is. (1983, 386)

The understanding of vocation exemplified in Lutheran theology, baptismal liturgy, ordination and consecration rites, and Lutheran hymnody all points to transformation: service, justice, and peace for all people is promised, sharing in Christ’s ministry of love and service to the world is covenanted, hope is proclaimed. As a lens through which we view what is needed in an uncharted future of the Lutheran church, this clear baptismal vocation serves as a guide and touchstone.

The Emerging Future - *Theory U*

Though not expressly theological, one additional framework is important for reflecting on the posture and imagination of leaders for an unknown future: the emerging future in Otto Scharmer’s *Theory U*. The subtitle for his first *Theory U* book, “Leading

from the Future as it Emerges,” emphasizes the necessity that leaders open themselves to an ambiguous and uncertain future. He writes:

Very often our sense of future possibilities is vague and amorphous. We can *feel* the future. But we cannot *see* it and *specify* precisely what it is. Yet that real-time connection to that space is the lifeline that guides us. (Scharmer 2016, xxxviii-xxxix)

He argues that leading from past experiences causes stagnation, moving apart, and merely muddling through. To lead from the future, he asserts, leaders must go through a process that follows a U-shaped curve:

1. Downloading past patterns
2. Seeing with fresh eyes
3. Sensing from the field
4. *Presencing* – connecting to source
5. Crystallizing vision and intention
6. Prototyping by linking head, heart, and hand
7. Performing by operating from the whole (Scharmer 2016)

In *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges* (2016), Scharmer asserts that *Theory U* necessitates and fosters an open mind, open heart, and open will. Those who engage it find that “we have to abandon our conventional ways of reacting and operating. We have to deepen our attention to and wonder about the world” (55). In fact, Scharmer argues, to engage the left side of the U, one must “download” (or diminish) the view that the primary job of a leader is to create a vision, goals, and direction, and instead see a leader’s primary role as “[enhancing] the individual and systemic capacity to see, to deeply attend to the reality that people face and enact” (132). Doing so facilitates the nexus of the two sides of the U, “presencing”—a combination of sensing and presence, or

the ability to perceive from the highest future possibility and bring it into the now.

Arriving at presencing requires connecting with “Source,” a deeper state of being that engages the highest future self, which Scharmer notes can be accessed through meditation/prayer and described as God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. “Crystallizing” sustains the movement up the right side of the U to “prototyping,” or experimenting, so that leaders “fail early and learn quickly.” Scharmer argues that experimenting leads to understanding the emerging future: “You feel drawn to doing something, but you don’t know exactly why. And only then, after using the intelligence of your hands and your heart, does your head begin to figure out the why” (208). Such prototyping can then lead to the final part of the U, “performing,” so that a future different from the past is realized.

Scharmer’s idea is that leadership is the capacity to shift the inner place from which leaders operate, and to shift the organizations they lead so that their members can sense, articulate, and realize emerging futures. The fact that the Indo-European root of the word “lead” and “leadership” comes from *leith*, meaning “to go forth,” “to cross a threshold,” “to die,” affirms “that something has to change—a threshold must be crossed—before something new can come” (Scharmer 2016, 112). This certainly connects to the Christian notion that death is required for resurrection to occur, shedding additional light on the posture needed for leaders to accept the loss that comes with change, and the imagination to allow something new to be resurrected.

Summary

This chapter highlighted the four theological frameworks of posture, imagination, transformation, and vocation, as well as the additional framework of leading from the emerging future as illustrated in *Theory U*, which guided the research and conclusions of

this project. The researcher utilized these frameworks in analyzing the results found in the Delphi surveys described in Chapter 4 to arrive at the conclusions and recommendations for church leadership offered in Chapter 5. Ultimately, the posture and imagination of Christian leaders will encompass and embody each of these frameworks as they face an uncharted future in the Lutheran church of the Pacific Northwest.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The following chapter describes the qualitative grounded theory methodology used by this researcher to explore the posture and imagination needed by clergy and lay leaders to serve the future church of the Northwest Washington Synod of the ELCA. The Delphi method of data collection is delineated with a rationale for its use with the research sample, setting, and data analysis outlined. In surveying clergy and lay leaders in ministries of the Northwest Washington Synod about their perspectives on and experiences of leadership, approaches to leadership were developed and discovered that will aid leaders in positioning themselves for ministry in the future church.

Overview of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover the posture and imagination necessary for clergy and laity to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years. The theory generated by this study was grounded in the experience and perspectives of the research subjects. Using the following research questions, both clergy and lay leaders were queried about the posture and imagination needed for themselves and one another as they lead in the uncharted territory of the future church:

1. What is the posture needed for clergy to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?
2. What is the posture needed for lay leaders to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?

3. What is the imagination needed for clergy to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?
4. What is the imagination needed for lay leaders to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?

Research Methods and Design

This qualitative research study was based on a grounded theory methodology to construct a theory of leadership generated by the data supplied by clergy and lay research participants from the Northwest Washington Synod of the ELCA. Because the focus of this study was the future of the church, the researcher utilized a Delphi method of research in which successive surveys of experts were used to summarize and respond to the results of the previous survey.

The goal of this qualitative study was to produce a “thick description” of leaders’ understanding of the posture and imagination necessary for future ministry. Such qualitative inquiry “is especially powerful as a source of *grounded theory*, theory that is inductively generated by field work” (Patton 2015, 18). A grounded theory emerges from data acquired from research subjects which, through coding and analyzing themes, produces an emerging story. The researcher is an instrument of the research through purposeful engagement: “Grounded theory begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis” (Charmaz 2014, 1). The unrestrictive nature of grounded theory “imbues the method with a curiosity, openness, and sense of wonder about the world” (Charmaz 2014, 278), a characteristic which is especially helpful for this study, as querying about the posture and

imagination of leaders for a future church that doesn't yet exist necessarily requires openness and curiosity.

One way to understand the concepts of posture and imagination in this research is through symbolic interactionism, a theoretical tradition developed by George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer at the University of Chicago in the early and mid-twentieth century. Symbolic interactionism recognizes that we act in response to how we view situations. The perspective of symbolic interactionism “views human actions as constructing self, situation, and society...subsequently we may alter our interpretations of what is, was, or will be happening” (Charmaz 2014, 261). How people interpret meaning through social interactions affects how they act. Thus, how clergy and lay leaders perceive the church and its future, affects their leadership posture and imagination. Symbolic interaction, as it relates to grounded theory, aids in understanding the symbols of posture and imagination in more depth in terms of their impacts now and anticipated impacts in the future.

Methods for Data Collection

The Delphi method was utilized for this research to elicit a broad range of expert opinions and consensus on the leadership posture and imagination needed for the Lutheran church of the future in the Pacific Northwest. Delphi is a qualitative method of data collection developed first by the RAND Corporation “to obtain the most reliable opinion consensus of a group of experts by subjecting them to a series of questionnaires in depth interspersed with controlled opinion feedback” (Dalkey and Helmer 1962, v). Successive iterations of questionnaires that continued to refine expert opinions allowed the researcher to discover consensus on the phenomenon being studied. The Delphi

method employed a controlled feedback process that assured anonymity, allowed participants to create additional insights, and avoided real or perceived pressure to conform to others' opinions (Hsu and Sandford 2007). This method allowed for ongoing participant conversation informed by others' comments without the risk of either power differentials or "group think."

This chapter describes the process beginning with the results of the initial open-ended survey, which were coded and categorized to summarize salient themes and attributes communicated by the study participants (Saldaña 2016). In a second iterative survey, the same participants were asked to rate the importance of each summative finding as they thought about the future in their own leadership contexts. In the successive questionnaire, participants clarified their judgements which led to consensus among the expert participants.

Sample Size and Demographics

The bishop of the Northwest Washington Synod, Rev. B. Kirby Unti, provided the researcher a suggested list of eighteen clergy in the synod whom he believed could serve as expert clergy participants in this study. The researcher requested the bishop choose clergy who had a perceived capacity for facing adaptive challenges in their ministerial contexts, and to make a concerted effort to include clergy who represented a broad spectrum of genders, races, sexual orientations, geographical locations, ages, and years of experience. This process of purposeful sampling (Creswell 2016) was requested so study participants not only represented a wide variety of synod leaders who understood the changing nature of the church, but also had interest in the leadership posture and

imagination necessary for church leadership in the coming years. Such purposeful sampling provided “information-rich cases for in-depth study” (Patton 2015, 264).

Through a form of “snowballing,” or respondent-driven sampling (Patton 2015), the researcher requested that those clergy recruit four lay leaders from their congregation or ministry site whom they believed had the desire and leadership capacity for adaptive and organizational change and could serve as expert lay participants. To preserve anonymity, only one of the four lay leaders provided by each clergy participant was recruited to participate in the study.

The process of recruiting participants proved somewhat challenging, likely due to the time of year (mid-November through early January) when the invitation to the first Delphi survey was distributed. Though many Delphi studies include a relatively small number of participants, and Hsu and Sandford assert that “an optimal number of subjects in a Delphi study never reaches consensus in the literature” (Hsu and Sandford 2007, 3), the researcher had hoped for 36 total clergy and lay participants, but set a minimum goal of 15 to 20 total participants to complete the entire series of Delphi surveys. The email invitation to the 18 clergy to participate in the first study (Appendix A) took four follow-up reminders (Appendix B) and an extended response time, resulting in the enlistment of 11 clergy participants who consented to research and completed the survey. This was potentially enough clergy to recruit lay participants as well as proceed to successive Delphi surveys in case any clergy participants dropped out of the study. However, the invitation to one of the four lay leaders recruited by each of those 11 clergy to participate in the first lay Delphi survey (Appendix C), along with three follow-up reminders (Appendix D), resulted in only five lay participants consenting to research and

completing the study. This number was too low to ensure the minimum desired research participants for successive Delphi surveys in the event any dropped out of the study. Thus, a second invitation to another one of the four lay leaders recruited by clergy members whose lay leaders had not responded to the first invitation was distributed, which, along with three follow-up reminders, resulted in an additional three lay participants. Table 3.1 outlines the distribution and participant numbers of the Delphi 1 survey.

Table 3.1: Delphi 1 Survey Distribution and Participants

Distribution	# of Recruited	Consented to research and completed survey
CLERGY	18	11
Email invitation: November 15, 2018		
Reminder 1: November 22, 2018		
Reminder 2: November 27, 2018		
Reminder 3: November 30, 2018		
Reminder 4: December 6, 2018		
LAY INVITATION 1	11	5
Email invitation: December 8, 2018	(Recruited by clergy	
Reminder 1: December 16, 2018	participants, invited	
Reminder 2: December 21, 2018	by researcher)	
Reminder 3: December 26, 2018		
LAY INVITATION 2	6	3
Email invitation: January 4, 2019		(Total lay participants:
Reminder 1: January 7, 2019		8)
Reminder 2: January 10, 2019		
Reminder 3: January 15, 2019		

Though not indicated in Table 3.1, one additional clergy recruit consented to research but later rescinded consent and did not complete the Delphi 1 survey. As noted later, this participant eventually consented to research and completed the Delphi 2 survey.

The Delphi 1 clergy survey (Appendix E) included the following questions and answer choices regarding the demographics of clergy participants:

- Years at current ministry? (Scales from 0-3 years to 19 or more years)
- Years of ordained ministry experience? (Scales from 0-5 to 30 or more years)
- Age range? (Scales from 20-30 to 60 or more)
- Gender? (Male, Female, or Non-binary)
- Race? (Blank provided for write-in answer)

As indicated in Table 3.2, the demographics of the Delphi 1 clergy survey participants were somewhat diverse, especially regarding years at current ministry and years of ordained service:

Table 3.2: Delphi 1 Demographics of Clergy Participants

Years at current ministry	0-3 years	4-8 years	9-13 years	14-18 years	19 or more	
# of Participants	2	3	3	1	2	
Years of ordained ministry experience	0-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	15-20 years	20-30 years	30 or more
# of Participants	2	2	0	3	2	2
Age range	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60+	
# of Participants	0	1	4	3	3	
Gender	Female	Male	Non-Binary			
# of Participants	7	4	0			
Race	Latino/Hispanic	Asian	Multi-racial/Caribbean	White/Caucasian		
# of Participants	1	1	1	8		

The Delphi 1 lay leader survey (Appendix F) included the following questions and answer choices regarding the demographics of lay participants:

- Years at current congregation/ministry? (Scales from 0-3 years to 19 or more years)
- Years of lay leadership experience? (Scales from 0-5 to 30 or more years)
- Age range? (Scales from 20-30 to 60 or more)
- Gender? (Male, Female, or Non-binary)
- Race? (Blank provided for write-in answer)

As illustrated in Table 3.3, the demographics of lay participants were not as diverse. One lay participant marked only age range and gender in the survey.

Table 3.3: Delphi 1 Demographics of Lay Participants

Years at current congregation/ ministry	0-3 years	4-8 years	9-13 years	14-18 years	19 or more	
# of Participants	0	2	0	1	4	
Years of lay leadership experience	0-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	15-20 years	20-30 years	30 or more
# of Participants	1	2	0	2	0	2
Age range	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60+	
# of Participants	0	1	1	2	4	
Gender	Female	Male	Non- Binary			
# of Participants	5	3	0			
Race	White/ Caucasian					
# of Participants	7					

Data Collection

Before the surveys were administered to clergy and lay participants, the Delphi 1 survey instrument was field tested by two clergy and two lay leaders known to the researcher. The field testers were asked the following questions:

1. How long did it take you to complete the survey?
2. What was helpful?
3. What was confusing?
4. Any other feedback? (i.e., how to word the introductions or questions)

Based on their responses, the researcher reworded some of the introductory material and determined that the Delphi 1 survey could take up to an hour to complete.

Each of the Delphi surveys was administered using Qualtrics, an online survey platform available through and branded for Seattle University. Survey participants received an email distributed through the Qualtrics platform with a link which they could use to access the survey an unlimited number of times before final submission. Two participants inadvertently submitted the survey prematurely, so a second link to the survey was emailed to them so they could complete the survey without duplicating the data they had previously entered.

With the exception of asking clergy for four names and email addresses of potential lay leader participants, the Delphi 1 surveys for clergy and lay leaders were identical (see Appendices E and F). After requiring a “yes” answer for consent to participate in the research and asking for demographic data, the survey began by defining posture with regard to positioning, capability, and attitude. Participants were asked,

- Think about what these definitions of ‘posture’ in relation to clergy and lay leadership mean for you.

- Consider the major adaptive challenges (challenges for which there are no quick or technical fixes) for the Lutheran church of the Northwest in general (i.e., declining membership) and in your particular context.
- Think about your current ‘posture’ of leadership, and brainstorm how leaders could be positioned for ministry in an uncharted future as they face adaptive challenges.

The survey then asked the open-ended questions, “What is the posture needed for clergy to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?” and “What is the posture needed for lay leaders to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?”

The definition of “imagination” was then described as the capacity to form new thoughts and picture something that does not currently exist. Because the researcher was interested in how new ideas or concepts for ministry could be created, participants were encouraged to:

- Think about experiments in ministry you have tried, i.e., how have you ‘done things outside the box’ that aren’t according to the traditionally ordered way of ministry.
- Think about questions you are asking, the potential perspectives you can be taking, and how you see systems operating in your ministry context.
- Think about what God is doing and nudging you toward. Think of what is possible amidst ambiguity and uncertainty.

Participants then were asked the open-ended questions, “What is the imagination needed for clergy to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?” and “What is the imagination needed for lay leaders to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?”

After collating survey results from the 11 clergy and eight lay leaders using Qualtrics-generated reports, the researcher utilized a coding team to code the raw data. A suggested list of potential coding experts who had participated in their own qualitative research had been supplied to the researcher by the bishop and an assistant to the bishop

of the Northwest Washington Synod of the ELCA. One of those experts, Dr. Todd Hobart, as well as a retired ELCA clergyperson, Rev. Suzanne Thomas, served with the researcher on the coding team. The resulting intercoder agreement added to the rigor, credibility, and depth of interpretation of the study (Creswell 2016). It also allowed for triangulation—three angles of outsider, insider, and researcher—to ensure validity of the findings (Sensing 2011).

The coding team met for almost five hours to code the data from the Delphi 1 surveys utilizing guidance prescribed in Johnny Saldaña's text, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*:

In qualitative data analysis, a code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes or 'translates' data...and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, assertion or proposition development, theory building, and other analytic processes. Just as a title represents and captures a book, film, or poem's primary content and essence, so does a code represent and capture a datum's primary content and essence. (Saldaña 2016, 4)

The coding group used elemental coding methods, including initial coding which incorporated process and in vivo coding (Saldaña 2016, 97). The result was a list of 15 to 29 codes for each research question. Each of the codes was then further grouped by the researcher and verified by the coding team, into three or four overarching themes for each of the categories of clergy and lay approaches to posture and imagination. The initial gathering of codes into obvious, overarching themes indicates that early on, even in the Delphi 1 survey, consensus was already forming regarding clergy and lay approaches to posture and imagination for future church leadership.

Those codes and overarching themes were used to create the Delphi 2 surveys which were distributed to the same 11 clergy and eight lay survey participants using the

Qualtrics platform. One of the clergy participants did not respond to the Delphi 2 survey; however, one participant who had originally consented to research but then rescinded consent for the Delphi 1 survey, reconsidered, consented to, and participated in research for the Delphi 2 survey. Thus, the total number of clergy participants remained at 11. Out of the eight lay participants invited to take the Delphi 2 survey, only five responded to the Delphi 2 survey. Table 3.4 summarizes the invitation and reminder dates, as well as number of responses.

Table 3.4: Delphi 2 Survey Distribution and Participants

Distribution	Invited	Completed Survey
CLERGY	11	11
Email invitation: January 23, 2019		(One participant from
Reminder 1: January 29, 2019		Delphi 1 did not
Reminder 2: February 2, 2019		respond, but one
Reminder 3: February 5, 2019		additional clergy
		consented to research
		and responded)
LAY	8	5
Email invitation: January 23, 2019		
Reminder 1: January 27, 2019		
Reminder 2: February 2, 2019		
Reminder 3: February 5, 2019		

This part of the Delphi process allowed for participants to further hone in on the most important aspects of posture and imagination developed in the first Delphi survey. As described by Hsu and Sandford in their 2007 article, “The Delphi Technique: Making Sense of Consensus”:

The controlled feedback process consists of a well-organized summary of the prior iteration intentionally distributed to the subjects which allows each participant an opportunity to generate additional insights and more thoroughly clarify the information developed by previous iterations (2007, 2)

Data Analysis

The Delphi 2 surveys for clergy and lay leaders (Appendices G and H) listed each of the coded themes along with a Likert scale to determine the importance each survey participant placed on the named posture or imagination. The scale ranged from 1 (Not Important) to 5 (Very Important), and each rating section also included two open-ended questions: “Please describe why you chose the ratings you did,” and “Any additional postures (imagination) for clergy (lay leaders) you would add?” The data was collected by Qualtrics and generated into reports listing the minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, and variance of each rating which the coding team then used to determine consensus around each approach to leadership rated by participants.

The coding meeting for the Delphi 2 survey was less time-intensive, though a February snowstorm forced one of the coding team members to join the meeting from a distance by using the FaceTime video application. It was clear from the Qualtrics reports that both clergy and lay leaders found much agreement around the posture and imagination needed for leaders in the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years. Even many of the “additional” postures or imagination named by participants could be linked somehow to previous coded responses from the Delphi 1 surveys.

In the Institutional Review Board application for this project, the researcher had indicated that the number of Delphi surveys needed would be determined once consensus of at least 80% was reached for each approach to leadership listed, as indicated by a mean of at least 4.0 (“Important”) on the Likert scale. The lowest mean in the Delphi 2 survey was 4.2; the highest was 4.8. Surprisingly, the Delphi 2 survey reached at least 80%

consensus for every named posture and imagination on both the clergy and lay surveys. Thus, no further Delphi surveys were required. The final ranking for each named posture and imagination was based on the highest mean and lowest standard deviation for each. The results of all the Delphi surveys, including the final rankings, are discussed in Chapter 4 of this study.

Ethical Considerations and Data Storage

In fall 2018, two rounds of applications were presented to the Seattle University Institutional Review Board, outlining the plans for ethical research, as well as the safekeeping and anonymity of data collected. The Institutional Review Board granted approval of the second application, anticipating no ethical issues due to the study (see Appendix I). Only electronic data records were kept by the researcher in a private, password-protected file within a private, password-protected OneDrive folder. The data will be kept for the required three years for human subject research and then destroyed.

Direct and indirect identifiers were collected from participants, including name, city of congregation/ministry, age, gender, race, and years of ordained or lay leadership experience. This demographic information (along with direct identifiers) was stored separately from the collected data, and each participant was referred to only by an assigned number (i.e., C1 or L1). The coding team never had access to the direct or indirect identifiers. The indirect identifiers were used only by the researcher to compare consensus or divergence of consensus between participants of differing genders, ages, ministerial contexts, years of leadership, etc. Differences between clergy and lay leaders were also compared, as responses that were divergent between the two groups could lead to suggested further study on the reasoning for such divergence.

Summary

This chapter described a grounded theory methodology which utilized a Delphi method to produce an emerging story about the posture and imagination necessary for clergy and lay leaders to lead and participate with God in the uncharted future of the Lutheran church in the Northwest. The process of data collection was detailed, including survey distribution and demographics of participants. The process of coding the results of two Delphi surveys was described, and analysis of the data based on an 80% consensus rate was delineated. Chapter 4 describes the findings from the two Delphi surveys, with Chapter 5 detailing the conclusions reached from the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

This project seeks to determine the posture and imagination necessary for clergy and lay leaders to lead the church in an unknown and unprecedented future. The study utilized an iterative Delphi process to survey 11 clergy and eight lay leaders in the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The research questions from the first Delphi survey inquired of both clergy and lay leaders:

1. What is the posture needed for clergy to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?
2. What is the posture needed for lay leaders to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?
3. What is the imagination needed for clergy to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?
4. What is the imagination needed for lay leaders to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?

As described in the previous chapter, the results of the first Delphi survey were coded and sent again to the same study participants to rate on a Likert scale the importance of each named posture and imagination. The second Delphi survey achieved at least 80% consensus of the participants on the importance of each of the named approaches to leadership, and thus no further Delphi surveys were required.

This chapter presents the findings of both Delphi surveys in the form of several tables. Accompanying each table is an analysis of the data, including comparisons

between clergy and lay leader responses. The chapter concludes with a description of the surprises found in the study's results.

Delphi Survey 1

As delineated in the previous chapter, in November 2018 through February 2019, 18 clergy and 11 lay leaders from the Northwest Washington Synod of the ELCA were invited to participate in the first Delphi survey. Eleven clergy and eight lay leaders consented to research and completed the first survey. The open-ended research questions listed above regarding the posture and imagination needed for clergy and lay leaders elicited written responses, some quite voluminous, which were coded by a coding team into the summative responses indicated in Tables 4.1-4.8. The summative responses were then grouped by the researcher into overarching categories of posture and imagination, indicating already some consensus among the participant responses. In each table, the italicized statements on the left indicate the overarching posture or imagination named and defined by the summative, coded responses on the right. The order in which they are listed is random. An analysis of the response data will accompany each table.

Clergy Responses to Clergy Posture

The first question posed to clergy required them to reflect on their own posture needed to lead a future church. This question prompted by far the longest responses, and therefore the highest number of codes (29). These responses are recorded in Table 4.1. As noted in the previous chapter, the introduction to the first question regarding posture required both clergy and lay leaders in their respective surveys to consider the major adaptive challenges (challenges for which there are no quick or technical fixes) for the Lutheran church of the Northwest in general and in their own context in particular. Their

answers regarding posture were to be based on how they believed leaders could be positioned to minister an uncharted future as they faced adaptive challenges. Their responses indicate that for the most part they had in mind an unchartered church future for which adaptive leadership would be necessary. They described the need for curiosity and openness, the need to experiment, and to know God would be present in an uncertain future. One even noted, “Many in our pews and neighborhoods have already developed the skills and practices for adaptive change. We as leaders need to be open to their expertise, critique, and guidance.”

Table 4.1: Clergy Responses to Posture Needed for Clergy

Posture Needed for Clergy	Summative Responses which led to named Posture
Humility and openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to adapt to folks who have been raised in the church, others new to the faith, and everyone in between • Have a spirit of learning; be willing to learn from many sources • Have a posture of cultural humility • Be comfortable with change • Attentive and active listening, including to those not part of the church • Be generous; share leadership even if choices are different than your own • Have a sense of humor • Adapt with creativity in the flow of the Holy Spirit • Be curious; engage community through curiosity • Be open in mind and heart, including an openness to others’ expertise, critique, and guidance; receive what is shared in a non-defensive manner
Confidence in God’s presence and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move with grace • Expect God to be present in an uncertain future

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be embracing • Be thankful • Be enthusiastic for what will be • Be joyful
Eagerness to take risks in new ways of being church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize God is involved even when not named • Be willing to let the church die if that's where God is leading • Be willing to experiment • View world and church as one • Use community-building ideas from the world • Understand what is at the core of being church, which can be lived out in many ways • Build relationships and collaborate with as many partners as possible
Invitational leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View other people as children of God, but not to indoctrinate, convince, or convert them • Be truthful and say hard things • Follow, model, and teach discipleship • Nurture and empower the community of faith to engage the world • Equip servants to join in God's mission • Build relationships and collaborate with as many partners as possible

One repeated response among clergy had to do with a posture of flexibility and openness. One described a mental picture based on Tai Chi, “the ability to move with grace and not using energy to fight against but rather move with the flow of the Holy Spirit.” Others noted the openness needed toward those of no faith or non-Christian faiths, which could be achieved only through intentional listening. And one respondent very clearly stated the need for openness to let the church die: “We know God won’t die, so what are we so scared of by the idea of the church dying?”

Lay Leader Responses to Clergy Posture

The reflections by lay leaders on the posture necessary for clergy in the future church is exhibited in Table 4.2. Compared to clergy, lay leaders gave similar responses regarding the need for adaptability and hope as postures for future church leadership. However, two main postures were highlighted by lay leaders which were missing in clergy responses: the posture of clergy as coaches, and the need for posturing around social justice consciousness. One respondent said, “The clergy must recognize the educated, activist generation as the ones who are equipped to carry out Christ’s commands—and help them do it.” The word “helping” was repeated several times; lay leaders will be looking to clergy for help in the future church, especially to help members find their place in serving the wider community.

Table 4.2: Lay Leader Responses to Posture Needed for Clergy

Posture Needed for Clergy	Summative Responses that led to named Posture
Coaching posture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as mentors for laity • Lead old and new groups to participate as one faith community • Help believers ready to do Christ’s work • Help members find place in serving community • Recruit and motivate volunteers
Adaptability/Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance new technology, interfaith partnerships, and gender/orientation issues with traditional Lutheran beliefs • Openness to alternative worship settings • Listening attitude • Faith balanced with doubt • Balancing old and new needs and vision • Accommodation of unchurched/non-traditional worshippers, while tending to traditional worshippers • Openness • Don’t let dogma and policy be a block

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming to different perspectives on how to live out the gospel • Attitude of welcoming acceptance • Forming and sharing an inspiring vision of inclusivity
Social justice conscience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church-supported advocacy to engage younger generations • Recognize the educated, activist generations ready to do Christ's work • Conscience for the homeless • Volunteer service-based • Political morality • Compassion • Love, live, and teach as Jesus
Hopeful attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude of steadfast hope • Foolish optimism • Humility • Affirming • Keep vibrant, meaningful worship

Unlike how clergy saw their posture for serving a future church, lay leaders spoke of the need for clergy to balance “the old and the new.” One asserted that clergy need “an attitude of welcoming acceptance and accommodation of those who are unchurched, non-traditional worshippers, while at the same time tending to the needs of their more traditional members.” Another said, “As the church adapts to the needs and vision of future generations, a concerted effort to keep older generations in a vibrant and meaningful worship environment should also be given energy and emphasis.” Yet another called for “balancing the inward focus of keeping the doors open with the outward focus of serving their community.” Though lay leaders see the need for openness and adaptability, they equally see the need for holding to traditions and what is comfortable and already known.

Clergy Responses to Lay Leader Posture

When clergy reflected on the posture necessary for lay leaders to lead a future church, they focused on flexibility, openness, and collaboration. As illustrated in Table 4.3, clergy recognize that any adaptive change cannot happen in the church without the openness and willingness of laity to adjust and collaborate.

Table 4.3: Clergy Responses to Posture Needed for Lay Leaders

Posture Needed for Lay Leaders	Summative Responses which led to named Posture
Willingness to adjust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be willing to let go of the way things have always been • Recognize that “God” does not equal “church” • Be willing to try new things, experiment, and risk • Be willing to make decisions that might kill the church • Be flexible
Humility and openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn • Be curious • Have an openness to neighbor and community; willingness to engage the neighborhood in which the church is located • Have gratitude • Have a posture of listening • Share • Have a sense of humor
Collaborative attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust the leadership of the congregation, synod, denomination • Work with rostered leaders to grow capacity for ministry • Move congregations forward with the Kingdom, not the institution, as the goal • Work with clergy in an asset-mapping-based servant ministry
Engagement with faith practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See faith as integral to all parts of life and life integral to all parts of faith

-
- Engage in deep Bible study
 - Be a disciple committed to the love of God lived out for us in Jesus
 - Be the priesthood of all believers as servants so the world will know, live, and join in God's work to mend the entire universe
 - Nurture practices that foster God's awareness in our midst
 - Engage in an expression of the Catechumenate
-

Many of the clergy respondents noted the posture needed for lay leaders was not qualitatively different from that of clergy, though one noted:

Whereas pastors are trained to move congregations forward with the Kingdom as the goal and not the institution...[lay leaders'] commitment to traditions, buildings, congregation members, liturgies, and so much more may get in the way of their ability to be flexible.

Interestingly, one difference in clergy responses regarding clergy and lay posture was the emphasis on lay leaders to engage in faith practices. Such a posture was not named by clergy for their own engagement.

Lay Leader Responses to Lay Leader Posture

The reflections lay leaders gave regarding the posture they themselves needed to face adaptive change and lead a future church are recorded in Table 4.4. Lay leaders see themselves needing an open, flexible, hopeful posture for the future church. One particularly adroit observation was:

We spend a lot of time in Seattle talking about inclusivity, but we still tend to stay in fellowship with people just like us. We don't walk the talk, and need to make opportunities to mix and learn about each other in bridging exercises and service-oriented activities.

Lay leaders also see themselves needing a posture of comfort with less church hierarchy, different adaptations of worship styles, and serving those in their communities "who have

been left behind by the world.” They see themselves in a future church needing to take on more responsiveness to church members and volunteers, and to hold fellow members accountable to follow through on commitments.

Table 4.4: Lay Leader Responses to Posture Needed for Lay Leaders

Posture Needed for Lay Leaders	Summative Responses that led to named Posture
Adaptability/Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith balanced with doubt • Comfort with less hierarchy • Comfort with adaptations to worship styles • Thinking outside the box to bring in the unchurched • Be cognizant of others’ beliefs and ideals in one faith community • Discerning inclusive actions
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith balanced with doubt • Comfort with less hierarchy • Comfort with adaptations to worship styles • Thinking outside the box to bring in the unchurched • Be cognizant of others’ beliefs and ideals in one faith community • Discerning inclusive actions
Hopeful attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayerful discernment supporting confident action • Humility • Foolish optimism
Social justice conscience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister to the needs of people left behind by the world • Compassion • Serving the least • Balancing service with nurturing worship and programs • Political morality

Again, the need for balance was also seen in lay leader responses: “following the call to serve the least of these in our communities... [while] balancing servant ministry with worship and programs that nurture [current] members.” As well, lay leaders see the need to balance “prayerful discernment with confident action,” and for faith to be balanced with doubt.

Clergy Responses to Clergy Imagination

The reflections of clergy pertaining to the imagination they need for leading a future church in the face of adaptive challenges is recorded in Table 4.5. In responding to the question about the imagination needed for clergy and laity, participants were encouraged to think about experiments in ministry they had tried, how they had done things “outside the box.” They were directed to consider the questions they are asking about the future, how they see systems operating in their ministerial context, and what God might be nudging them toward. They were to “think about what is possible amidst ambiguity and uncertainty.”

One clergy respondent asserted that the deepest challenge facing the present and future church is a failure of imagination. Several biblical images were offered for instilling imagination: the need to “trust God’s covenant promise to bring new life out of our valley of dry bones” and to “see how God’s people broke through their imaginative gridlock by embracing the challenge to leave the familiarity of slavery in Egypt and venture out into the unknown and unpredictable wilderness.” The biblical theme of death and resurrection was repeated by a few respondents, such as, “we need to tell the truth about the death of many parts of the church and yet hold to the resurrection story.”

Another repeated idea was that of breaking loose—of fear of loss, of the church’s past, of the physical spaces of buildings, of the traditional work of clergy. One respondent noted that clergy are no longer considered primary leaders or sources for moral guidance in their communities, and so imagination for ministry must go beyond their traditional roles. Another offered that the work of clergy must be like that of a medical researcher, “to find cures and treatments for what ails the [church’s] body.” Doing so, this respondent said, would allow for research that is bold, experimental, and methodical.

Table 4.5: Clergy Responses to the Imagination Needed for Clergy

Imagination Needed for Clergy	Summative Responses which led to named Imagination
Freedom from bounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let go of fear of loss • Do not be bound by affordability or numbers • Share power with others in the congregation • Provide spiritual space for those who claim no faith
Experimental imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have imagination of a researcher to be bold, experimental, and methodical • Partner together to find cures and treatments for the church • Initiate experiments; be willing to risk, fail, and try again • Ask new questions individually and with others • Clarify purposes that invite and welcome imagining • Asset-based experimentation • Redefine what a good idea is • Be open to new possibilities • Be willing to explore, risk, try new things • Be willing to learn from experiments • Invite people into the spiritual activities and reflections out in secular community

Capacity for learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See what the rest of the world is up to • Clergy must imagine a different vision of themselves in relation to community to have a voice in important issues • Understand current culture's deepest longings and struggles • Learn from different perspectives, including those inside and outside the church • Read or listen to podcasts around spirituality to have a feel for what people are thinking and searching for
Capacity for trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help community see how God's people broke through their imaginative gridlock by embracing the challenge to leave the familiarity of slavery in Egypt and venture out into the unknown and unpredictable wilderness • Trust that as God did it before, God will do it again • Have a biblically-informed imagination that trusts God's covenant promise to bring new life out of our valley of dry bones • Trust in death and resurrection

Lay Leader Responses to Clergy Imagination

Table 4.6 displays how lay leaders reflected on the imagination they believed their pastors needed for facing a church future of adaptive challenges, seeming to echo what clergy believed, as well. Like clergy themselves, lay leaders see a primary need for clergy to have an open and experimental imagination for the future church. One called for an openness to “new worship ideas, new music, new worship days, new worship hours.” Another called for clergy to accept and implement new ideas that were not their own, and yet another even encouraged trying and failing.

An imagination of discovery was also affirmed: discovering what is meaningful to people and finding ways to express it, and discovering what is spirit-driven rather than

calendar-driven. One respondent questioned why there is only “classroom Sunday School,” and why the church couldn’t join forces with other “ministry” already occurring in the wider community. And one gave this encouragement for the openness of clergy imagination for the future church: “Imagine a church where you are fed, and then be that church. If you wouldn’t attend your church if you didn’t have to, then why would anybody else?”

Table 4.6: Lay Leader Responses to Imagination Needed for Clergy

Imagination Needed for Clergy	Summative Responses which led to named Imagination
Freedom from bounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness to new ideas • Willingness to accept and implement ideas that are not their own • Openness to new worship music, days, hours • Not allowing “no” • Recognize and join other non-church ministry efforts in the community
Discover meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine what feeds you (clergy) and implement that • Discover what is meaningful to and feeds people • Express and allow others to shape what is meaningful • Survey groups inside and outside the church about what is needed and what is wrong with the church • Encourage a discussion forum of younger people from a variety of faith backgrounds
Experimental imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision beyond ministry in the building • Experiment with little ideas • Try and fail • Encourage brainstorming • Vision to see new service opportunities • Spirit-driven (fasting, celebration, quiet sabbath) vs. liturgical calendar-driven activities

-
- Use media through technology to grow faith development
-

Clergy Responses to Lay Leader Imagination

The reflections clergy gave in regard to the imagination lay leaders need for a future church are highlighted in Table 4.7. Again, clergy placed more emphasis on biblically-informed lay imagination rather than their own. However, similar broad and experimental approaches to imagination as that of clergy were highlighted. One noted, “Lay leaders need to imagine what a community of faith may be like without clergy as the central driving force for ministry.” As well, the idea of loosening the bonds of fear was mirrored in the need for lay leader imagination: “When laypeople are able to crash through fear and see as God provides and leads, they are emboldened into the future.”

Table 4.7: Clergy Responses to Imagination Needed for Lay Leaders

Imagination Needed for Lay Leaders	Summative Responses which led to named Imagination
Capacity for trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust God’s promise of new life • See God as actively present and engaged in the world • Strengthen hopes by pondering what to hope in
Broad imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine church around people, not church structure • Provide an assets-mapping approach to congregational life • Imagine programs that the church may not have offered in the past • Consider oneself a midwife to embody the purposeful bearing, capacity, and behavioral attitude needed to empower the baptized • Imagine the church caring for the whole person, not just the “spiritual” side

Biblically-informed imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build trusting relationships grounded in ongoing conversation with the biblical narrative • Nurture faith formation in community • Deep conversation with Word and world • Develop a form of the Catechumenate
Attention to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage one's own context • Listen deeply to understand one another

Lay Leader Responses to Lay Leader Imagination

Lay leaders see their imagination for a future church needing to expand beyond their current imagination. Their reflections on expanding their own imagination is recorded in Table 4.8. Again, a biblical and spiritual focus was called upon to broaden such imagination. One said, “The world is looking for spiritual guidance and we keep doing rules and building funds and activities. The face of the church needs to be its hands working from a heart centered on Jesus.” Another noted the need to “stop looking at each other [and] begin seeking the kingdom.” And perhaps in a move beyond the need for “balance” described in responses above, one participant noted, “Tradition is comforting, and can still be maintained. But we must actively push ourselves to look at new ideas, new goals, and new populations that can help us grow in God’s ways.”

Table 4.8: Lay Leader Responses to Imagination Needed for Lay Leaders

Imagination Needed for Lay Leaders	Summative Responses that led to the named Imagination
Imagination beyond “what is”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for new ideas • Get change-resistant congregants on board to try new things for the sake of the gospel • Understand different imaginations sharing the road • Saying “what if” early and often • Quit trying to determine right from wrong

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create “WOW” moments • Look at new ideas, goals, populations beyond heritage belief systems • Carefully listen to multiple points of view
A focus on Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the commands of Jesus • Patiently await the master’s return • Seek to understand Christ’s will • Pray for the church • Be joyful in Christ’s presence
Engagement with community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand non-churched communities • Vision church as people, not place • Engage with the community to learn how to reach the marginalized

Delphi Survey 2

The second iterative Delphi survey used the summative, coded response statements quoted in the previous tables to determine the level of importance for each named posture and imagination for leadership in the future church. Each named posture and imagination was presented with a Likert scale ranging from one (“Not Important”) through five (“Very Important”). Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each posture and imagination for clergy and laity to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years. In addition, respondents were asked to describe the ratings they chose and to add any additional postures and imagination they believed were lacking (see Appendices G and H).

For the second Delphi survey, one additional clergy participant consented to research, and one did not respond to the second survey, thus 11 clergy completed the survey. Two lay leaders did not respond to the second survey, so six lay responses were recorded. Responses were collected during January and early February 2019. Tables 4.9-

4.16 display the findings of the second Delphi survey. The mean (based on the 1-5 rating of Not Important to Very Important) and standard deviation (based on comparison to other responses to the same question) for each rating is listed, and a rank of importance is given based on the highest mean and lowest standard deviation for each named posture and imagination. The overarching postures and imagination named on the left side of each table remain listed in the same random order as the Delphi 1 survey tables, but the rank, recorded on the right side of each table, indicates the level of importance placed on each posture and imagination in the Delphi 2 survey. Commentary and analysis of the ratings accompany each table.

Importance of Clergy Postures from Clergy

Based on the number of times “openness” and “humility” were mentioned by clergy in the first Delphi survey, it is no surprise it ranked as the most important posture for clergy for future church leadership in the second Delphi survey as illustrated in Table 4.9. Perhaps most interesting is that each named posture was rated so highly, and the lowest mean (4.50) still indicates a rating between “Important” and “Very Important.” In fact, several clergy commented on how essential each posture was for leadership in the next five years in the synod: “I put all in the highest categories because as I look at them, these are key areas we need to be aware of and attend to for our moving forward into the future,” “I wanted to vary my answers and say that one or two of these were important but not very important and I couldn't do it,” “All of the above are so important in doing this work.”

Table 4.9: Clergy Responses to the Importance of Postures for Clergy

Posture	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank of importance
Humility and openness	4.82	.39	1
Confidence in God's presence and guidance	4.80	.40	2
Eagerness to take risks in new ways of being church	4.75	.62	3
Invitational leadership	4.50	.67	4

Clergy indicated they rated the need for humility, openness, and eagerness to take risks so high because:

We have something unique to offer but we need to find creative, experimental, and collaborative ways to 'be' the church, engaged in the world, because the old ways do not work anymore. We have to be willing to get outside our church walls, to go where Jesus is going, in order to be the living, breathing body of Christ out in the world.

Humility and Openness are required in order to survive and sustain the difficult conflicts and conversations.

In thinking about where our synod needs the most help I am convinced that it is not necessarily about getting ourselves out into our neighborhoods (though that is important) as much as it is about leading our congregations to trust each other. A model of humility and openness along with a confidence in our mission could lead us to develop more dynamic partnerships with each other that will then lead us in a healthy way into our neighborhoods.

Change is going to happen whether we help it along or not, but the only way for us to be part of the change God is bringing is for us to embrace that eagerness to take risks.

The posture of confidence in God's presence and guidance also ranked highly for these reasons:

The primary call of clergy is to trust, believe and name the presence of God in our midst. Thus, it will always, in any context, be of preeminent importance.

In whatever we do, we need to keep God at the center. Even as the culture around us devalues the church, the church cannot devalue what makes it the church: the living, breathing body of Christ.

Confidence in God's presence and guidance are what gets me through the times when I feel as though I am failing...failing the congregation and failing my call.

One clergy respondent summarized the outcome of these postures, stating they-

...are essential for helping the church be church in these days, but more importantly for helping the clergy person be the person they need to be in this profession. These approaches will help them to serve, to lead and to last.

Three additional postures for clergy were offered by the clergy respondents:

- Collaboration:

I am becoming increasingly more convinced that the church and its leadership must be willing to collaborate with one another in order to effectively join up with what God is doing in the world. Even that overused phrase—"join up with what God is doing"—suggests collaboration. We simply cannot operate in our little silos anymore. We do not have the financial or human capital to do what we once were able to do in Christ's name and collaborating will allow us to do more than we can do on our own. We have to be willing to give up what is "ours" (our building, our worship patterns, perhaps even our people) in order to work together for the common good, acting and functioning like the one of Christ, rather than little bodies of Christ that are struggling on their own or trying to re-invent the wheel.

- Cross-cultural competency: "An explicit commitment to developing effective, measurable cross-cultural competency."

- Trust:

I want to find a good overall way to describe being able to reach out for help, appreciate colleagues, seek spiritual direction, go to counseling, use a coach, laugh and cry with others, trust others to be with you in heart/mind/spirit. Even trust congregational people for support, heart, and engagement.

Importance of Clergy Postures from Lay Leaders

Table 4.10 presents the ratings lay leaders gave regarding the importance of clergy postures for leading a future church. Interestingly, the standard deviation was high

for this category; ratings ranged between “neutral” (3) to “very important” (5) for both “coaching posture” and “social justice conscience.” However, comments did not necessarily corroborate the difference between the ratings offered.

Table 4.10: Lay Leader Responses to the Importance of Postures for Clergy

Posture	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank of importance
Coaching posture	4.50	.76	3
Adaptability/ Flexibility	4.67	.47	2
Social justice conscience	4.33	.75	4
Hopeful attitude	4.80	.40	1

Though it ranked third in importance in this survey, lay leaders commented on the need for clergy to adopt a coaching posture: “It’s time to be Jesus in the streets and with and among each other. [Clergy] need to encourage this in everything they do. Lead—and encourage us to ‘go and do likewise’.” Others saw coaching as very important to enable the laity to multiply the efforts of the clergy.

Clergy might appreciate the reflection of one lay leader regarding clergy posture needed for the future church:

I think they are all important. HOWEVER, I do think that it might be impossible for any one clergy to have all of those at one time. It’s more like one has to pick and choose the options that best apply to one’s situation, knowing that next week might require another set.

No additional posture for clergy was offered.

Importance of Lay Leader Postures from Clergy

Table 4.11 records the responses of the importance clergy place on the postures needed for lay leaders for a future church. Not surprisingly based on the Delphi 1 survey, clergy rated lay leaders' engagement (though not necessarily their own engagement) with faith practices as most important for future church leadership. One clergy respondent even picked up on the disparity: "These are the areas that even clergy need to be led into. How many of us honestly engage in our faith practices?" Clergy see engagement with faith practices as "the primary way in which we can be church and not just a social service agency." However, one noted, "I also recognize that not all lay leaders have the time or capacity to engage in things like the catechumenate, deep bible study, or even engaging in the community where the church is located."

Table 4.11: Clergy Responses to the Importance of Postures for Lay Leaders

Posture	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank of importance
Willingness to adjust	4.73	.62	3
Humility and openness	4.70	.46	2
Collaborative Attitude	4.60	.49	4
Engagement with faith practices	4.80	.40	1

One clergy respondent summarized why these postures for lay leaders are so crucial in their current context:

In a year when I continue to hear lamenting in my congregation about worship attendance (comparing Christmas Eve attendance to an average Sunday, for example), lay leaders need to recognize that this period of time does not

necessarily mean that the church is dying but, rather, that the church could, potentially, be in the process of rebirth. This recognition can only come when we are willing to let go of what the church used to be and be willing to receive what the church is becoming. And that is only possible when we immerse ourselves in the Bible, the story of the Resurrection, in particular, and imagine what that story might have in store for us, when numbers cannot and should not be our only measure of success.

Another clergy respondent saw the connection between these postures for lay leaders for the future church: “A humble and open posture makes space for collaboration and adaptability, making it also very important. Once folx (*sic*) are grounded in their faith with a posture of humility and openness, collaborative adaptability can follow.” One offered an additional posture for lay leaders—joy and hope that God is at work: “God is the leader of the ministry and God will provide.”

Importance of Lay Leader Postures from Lay Leaders

Although three of the four named postures for lay leaders earned a higher standard deviation (.80), as indicated in Table 4.12, the results still seemed to draw relatively equal consensus from lay leader respondents. After adaptability/flexibility, they place equal importance on responsiveness, a hopeful attitude, and a social justice conscience. They even see the postures they will need for leadership in the future church like those which will be needed for clergy: “We all need to work together to carry out Christ's work on earth.” Another commented that all the named postures for lay leaders were “very important.”

Table 4.12: Lay Leader Responses to the Importance of Posture for Lay Leaders

Posture	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank of importance
Adaptability/ Flexibility	4.67	.47	1
Responsiveness	4.60	.80	2 (tie)
Hopeful attitude	4.60	.80	2 (tie)
Social justice conscience	4.60	.80	2 (tie)

One lay leader had an interesting reaction to one of the named postures:

I rated all very important except for the Social Justice component. My hesitation is that regardless of how well-meaning we lay persons are, we tend to politicize our beliefs and morality to the exclusion of others. In these politically charged climates of today, I have seen this to become divisive. I fully supported a show of solidarity with our local Muslim mosque, and wholeheartedly supported one of the first gay marriages in our community, but I have been aware that this was too much for others to accept from me or my leadership while being a leader on council.

One additional posture for lay leaders was named: a listening posture. One respondent articulated three practices of intentional listening: “Practice one – Be unusually interested in others. Practice two – Stay in the room with a difference. Practice three – Stop comparing my best with your worst.”

Importance of Clergy Imagination from Clergy

In Table 4.13, clergy ratings regarding the importance of clergy imagination to lead a future church are recorded. Although the mean was relatively high and standard deviation relatively low, the standard deviation was still significant given the disparity between the ratings of “important/very important” and the comments based on the ratings.

Table 4.13: Clergy Responses to the Importance of Imagination for Clergy

Imagination	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank of importance
Freedom from bounds	4.50	.50	3 (tie)
Experimental imagination	4.60	.66	2
Capacity for learning	4.50	.50	3 (tie)
Capacity for trust	4.70	.64	1

Even though it ranked second in importance in this survey, and was highlighted multiple times in the first Delphi survey, one said, “I am increasingly becoming less impressed with experimentation. I am not saying that we need not experiment, but I wonder if we need to be more about lifting up imagination in using the tools that we already have.” Another commented:

Experimental imagination of clergy is not as important as clergy being open to the leadership of others. If a clergy person is limited in their experimental imagination, it can be compensated by other lay leaders. Thus this is of less importance than a capacity to trust others.

Many clergy also commented on the need for trust—but mostly trust in God: “A biblical imagination that is not bound to old ways of thinking is of the utmost importance for clergy imagination. Trusting God and others whom God has sent our way will be a vital part of leadership moving forward,” “One can't be free until one trusts God and the others whom God gathers,” “I DEFINITELY think trusting God is critical.”

One additional imagination for clergy was offered—Accountability:

I believe that we would improve our clergy leadership effectiveness if we required explicit accountability from ourselves as clergy. Ordination is not in the issue or in question. If we required regular re-certification (real collegial assessment and accountability—not pro forma going through the motions workshops) for

continued eligibility to be rostered we would be making the implicit expectations explicit and raise the bar on ourselves. This is the most fundamental and foundational act of imagination which informs all the other categories and characteristics we are looking for in clergy leadership.

Importance of Clergy Imagination from Lay Leaders

As noted in Table 4.14, the responses of lay leaders regarding the importance of clergy imagination is clear: clergy need to experiment. Even though it contradicts what some clergy themselves commented on regarding downplaying experimentation, imagination based on experimentation and freedom from bounds for future church leadership were enthusiastically embraced by lay leaders:

Spirit-driven vision beyond the building strikes me as super-important! We can do nothing without the spirit, but we do nothing if we sit and imagine the spirit will lift us up and carry us in his/her arms. We need to try out what sounds right to see if it is—and then keep experimenting until we feel we are one with the spirit in our actions.

Another, however, commented that other priorities have to come before “freedom from bounds.”

Table 4.14: Lay responses to the importance of imagination for clergy

Imagination	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank of importance
Freedom from bounds	4.20	.75	2 (tie)
Discover meaning	4.20	.75	2 (tie)
Experimental imagination	4.80	.40	1

One lay leader commented on imagination in general: “Imagination is critically important. It is a gift from God to us to use in new ways and ideas to improve the world.

How are we going to get better if we just keep doing the same old thing?” No additional imagination for clergy was suggested.

Importance of Lay Leader Imagination from Clergy

As evidenced in Table 4.15, clergy believe lay leaders most need an imagination based on attention to others and informed by the Bible. Two clergy respondents highlighted the connection between the highest rankings of lay imagination for future church leadership: “New imagination for lay leaders means being ground in God's Word and placing the other before oneself,” and “Lay leaders need to have broad imagination that allows for biblical imagination to be the guide.” Another commented on why a biblically-informed imagination is so crucial:

In a world where God's word is abused, we need to help our people to have the tools to dissect the bad theology out there in a way that expresses the grace of God that can and does change the world.

And one noted, “...again, openness and flexibility rule the day.”

Table 4.15: Clergy Responses to the Importance of Imagination for Lay Leaders

Imagination	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank of importance
Capacity for trust	4.55	.55	4
Broad imagination	4.60	.49	3
Biblically-informed imagination	4.70	.46	2
Attention to others	4.80	.40	1

One additional imagination for lay leaders was offered: hopefulness. “Again, we need a hopeful imagination—not a desperate or fearful one. We need joy of what is to

come. Appreciation for the opportunity to imagine. Excitement about the possibilities that will open up.” As well, one respondent commented, “Listening deeply is probably the most critical, necessary, and life-bringing of all.”

Importance of Lay Leader Imagination from Lay Leaders

Table 4.16 illustrates how lay leaders ranked the importance of “engagement with community” and “imagination beyond ‘what is’” exactly the same. In commenting on the importance of lay leader imagination for the future church, one lay person noted, “All are important or very important. Often, I think the laity leaves this imagination to the pastors.” Two others lifted up the particular importance of the focus on Christ and Christo-centric ideas:

We always have to be focused on Christ, following his commands while we await his return. This is NOT sitting around, but working with those in the community and congregation to achieve the mission of church as the people not the place. Change-resistant congregants will come on board when they see the work accomplishing things.

Table 4.16: Lay Leader Responses to the Importance of Imagination for Lay Leaders

Imagination	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank of importance
Imagination beyond “what is”	4.60	.49	1 (tie)
A focus on Christ	4.60	.80	2
Engagement with community	4.60	.49	1 (tie)

One respondent offered a humorous reflection on the imagination needed for lay leaders and the role lay leaders play in congregations:

How to get the horse to water and also to drink. That's the hard part. Sometimes it takes a lot of convincing to not get that old horse to turn around and go back. Although, speaking of water...that reminds me of baptism and looking at the other kind of horse (the unchurched). They also don't always like to get in the water. HA. So, we've got old horses inside the church, that don't want to drink the water and we've got young horses outside the church that don't want to drink the water. Patience. Patience.

No additional imagination for lay leaders was articulated.

Surprises

Several surprises arose for the researcher as a result of the two Delphi surveys:

- Only two rounds of iterative surveys were needed to reach 80% or more consensus regarding the posture and imagination needed for clergy and lay leaders. The researcher did not expect such clear consensus in only two surveys, and was also surprised by the amount of “Very Important” ratings which were given by both clergy and lay leaders to the named postures and imagination.
- Although there were certainly clear similarities, the differences between clergy and lay perspectives on the leadership needed for the future church was a bit surprising. Particularly stark was the importance both clergy and lay leaders placed on faith practices, a Christo-centric focus, and biblically-informed imagination for laity, but not for clergy. Lay leaders also saw the importance of a social justice conscience for both clergy and themselves, but clergy rarely articulated the same need. These differences point to the unique perspectives of both clergy and lay leaders, and why it was important to garner each of these perspectives in the Delphi surveys.
- One valuable part of research was realizing that even respected leaders, recommended by their bishop or pastor as expert participants, at times found

themselves at a loss to describe the posture and imagination they believed was necessary for future leadership. One clergy participant consented to research then rescinded their consent after reading the questions from the first Delphi survey. They described in an email to the researcher how anxious and bewildered they felt about how to answer. The participant later reconsidered and consented to research for the second Delphi survey, but described how disheartened they felt about not knowing at first how to answer, so much so that it made them question their pastoral call! The reaction of the participant is notable, highlighting that leading adaptively in an unknown future can produce deep anxiety amid uncertainty. The researcher wonders if those who opted not to take either the first or second Delphi survey also felt stymied by how to answer the questions, and thus did not complete the survey.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings from two iterative Delphi surveys which queried both clergy and lay leaders in the Northwest Washington Synod about the posture and imagination needed for leadership in the next five years in the Lutheran church in the Northwest. Results of the first survey highlighted the summative responses for each leadership approach, and respondents to the second survey rated each named posture and imagination. Surprises garnered by the results were also discussed. The following chapter describes the conclusions drawn from the findings, as well as the areas of research requiring future study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This written project began with asserting that the church, like the world, is increasing in volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). The research described in this project aimed to discover the leadership postures and imagination of both clergy and laity that create the capacity to participate with God in facing unknown adaptive challenges in a complex future and across diverse ministerial contexts in the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The findings from two Delphi surveys were delineated in Chapter 4 and are now utilized in this chapter to create a grounded theory of leadership. What follows are reflections and recommendations for clergy and lay leaders regarding the posture and imagination needed to lead the Lutheran church of Northwest Washington for the next five years.

It should be noted, as described in Chapter 1, that this study did not consider particular adaptive challenges currently facing the church. The recommendations described below are intended to assist clergy and lay leaders to know how to posture themselves and what kind of imagination is needed to face unknown future adaptive challenges, no matter what they are. In this chapter, the recommended postures and imagination are considered alongside the theological foundations that undergirded the study, the postures and imagination exhibited by Jesus and our participation with him, as well as the concepts of the emerging future introduced in Otto Scharmer's *Theory U* and those of Jennifer Garvey Berger and Keith Johnston in *Simple Habits for Complex Times: Powerful Practices for Leaders*.

The following nine recommendations pertain to leadership postures and imagination for both clergy and lay leaders together, as well as individual recommendations for clergy and lay leaders, respectively. Following the recommendations, conclusions regarding areas requiring future study are discussed.

Posture Recommendations for Clergy and Lay Leaders

In Chapter 2, an exploration of posture asserted that the postures of leaders—spiritual, physical, and emotional—have bearing on their ability to face adaptive challenges in an unknown church future. The following recommendations regarding posture for clergy and lay leaders, both together and individually, are intended to help leaders posit themselves in ways that will help them face adaptive challenges and move through them toward adaptive change.

Recommendation #1: Humility, Openness, and Flexibility

The adaptive and complex challenges that the church of the future will face may be ones we cannot even imagine now. We do not know now, nor will we know until we move through them (and perhaps not even then), how to address every challenge. However, when leaders approach the future with a sense of openness and flexibility to whatever lies ahead, and when they arrive at challenges with a sense of humility that they don't already have the answers, they will be postured well for beginning to address whatever is to come.

Certainly, Jesus displayed an openness to what lay ahead of him. Jesus' self-emptying humility as illustrated in Philippians 2, and his prayer "not my will but yours be done" (Lk 22:42), illustrate his open and humble posture that allowed him to face a volatile future. This encourages clergy and lay leaders to be open to what God is doing

with the church. Participating with God in such a spirit of openness makes us partners with God in the church's future: "Imitation tends to stress what God *has done*. Participation invites us into what God *is doing and will continue to do* as God's promises in Christ are brought into fulfillment" (Van Gelder and Zscheile 2011, 111).

According to the clergy and lay experts in this Delphi study, both clergy and lay leaders affirm the need to be curious and engender a spirit of learning. Certainly, this echoes what Heifetz and Linsky argue in *Leadership on the Line*: "To succeed in leading adaptive change, you will need to nurture the capacity to listen with open ears, and to embrace new and disturbing ideas" (2002, 233). Gordon Lathrop also describes the need for a "*strong center and open door*...open door to the reality of the condition of the world. Strong center in bread and forgiveness. Open door in the priestly identity of the assembly for the sake of the life of the world" (Lathrop 2006, 37).

There is an additional gift in this posture of openness, humility, and flexibility: it demands that both clergy and laity be open to the realities of their communities and world. This addresses the need lay leaders in the study saw for a "social justice posture." As Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile (2011) assert, "the church is a community of mutual participation in God's own life and the life of the world—a participation characterized by openness to others" (107). Being open to the lives of other people necessarily means that we are open to their woundedness and struggles, and a posture of humility admits our own complicity—especially those with privileged social rank—in creating the realities others face.

Lastly, this sense of openness, humility, and flexibility leads to what was found in the study to be a critical stance of both posture and imagination for clergy and laity: one

of experimentation. As described further in the following, the openness to experiment is the key to learning and facing an unknown future. But in order to experiment, clergy and lay leaders must first posit themselves in an open, humble, and flexible way.

Recommendation #2: Confidence and Hope

Both clergy and lay leaders in the survey noted the importance of hopefulness and confidence as postures needed to face an unknown future. They affirmed an expectation that God is already present in the future, and even advocated for a “foolish optimism” regarding the unknown. Because God is the source of hope, they can have confidence for the future. They believed that prayerful discernment could lead to confident action, and thus the practice of prayer could engender a confident and hopeful posture.

Otto Scharmer’s concept in *Theory U* of the emerging future can be helpful here. He maintains that “presencing” allows leaders to perceive from the highest future possibility to bring it into the present. Such presencing requires engaging with the highest future self, which can be accessed through, among other things, prayer (Scharmer 2016). Posturing toward a higher and hopeful future allows clergy and lay leaders to maintain confidence for what lies ahead.

The biblical and theological concepts of transformation and resurrection also support this kind of posture. As described in Chapter 2, Jesus’ entire ministry was predicated on transformation and resurrection. Nothing Jesus became part of stayed the same. Remaining confident and hopeful about the future means being postured alongside Jesus through whom transformation and resurrection occurs. If clergy and lay leaders are faced in the same direction Jesus is, we have hope and confidence for a future in which resurrection always has the last word.

Recommendation #3: Scripture and Faith

Scriptural stories like the exodus/wilderness drama, Jesus' death and resurrection, the story and verse from 2 Chronicles 20:12 cited in Chapter 2—"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you"—all encapsulate the posture leaders need to face an unknown future. Stories of individuals in scripture who experienced the unknown and yet endured engender trust, hope, new life, and faithfulness for leaders regarding what lies ahead in their own ministries. Being steeped in scripture and practices highlighted in baptismal vocation—to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace throughout the earth—help posture clergy and lay leaders to face a VUCA future by giving solid and known "handholds" along a complex and unknown path.

Interestingly, as described in Chapter 4, a majority of clergy and lay leaders only suggested that a posture toward scripture and practices of faith be applied to lay leaders. It seems obvious, however, that it is also necessary for clergy. It is through scripture and practices of faith that posture and imagination are formed and nurtured. Though it is beyond the scope of this research, it is clear from the Delphi study that this posture toward scripture and practices of faith must be named and intentionally held by both clergy and lay leaders. Doing so will consequently cultivate all the postures and imagination named here.

Posture Recommendations for Clergy

Recommendation #4: A Coaching Posture

Lay leaders were clear that this is what they need from their pastors: a coach to mentor and help them lead in an unknown and uncertain future. The 2006 work of Bass and Riggio on transformational leadership affirms this coaching role for leaders. They assert that transformational leaders stimulate and inspire followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes. In considering a VUCA future, “extraordinary” could mean something as basic as inspiring lay leaders to keep moving through a confusing and unpredictable present to engender courage in order to face an even more complex future.

The transformational leadership of Jesus himself serves as a model for such a coaching posture. As cited in Chapter 2, Jesus instilled in his followers a confidence and ability to do ministry themselves. In accompanying laity like Jesus did, clergy can fulfill this vocational directive from the ELCA’s *Candidacy Manual*: “Showing people the crucified Christ through word and deed that enables them to envision what God is doing in the world and in their lives” (24).

This necessitates another posture: clergy must listen well to those they are coaching, as well as to the world and the Word, to know how to coach laity. All the leadership literature reviewed for this project affirmed the directive to “listen, listen, listen.” Garvey Berger and Johnston even call listening a “survival habit for complexity” (2015, 74). Listening to those whom the clergy are coaching, as well as to the world they inhabit and the scripture which forms them, helps clergy and lay leaders to trust and inherit the Holy Spirit’s leadership for God’s promised future (Hahn 2014).

Posture Recommendations for Lay Leaders

Recommendation #5: A Willingness to Adjust

In their book *Simple Habits for Complex Times* (2015), Garvey Berger and Johnston assert that agility is a key posture for a complex and uncertain future. The church of the past is not nor will be the church of the future. In the face of adaptive challenges, lay leaders must have a posture of agility and willingness, and, as described by Heifitz and Linsky, engage in “adjusting their unrealistic expectations, rather than trying to satisfy them as if the situation were amenable primarily to a technical remedy” (Heifitz and Linsky 2002, 15).

A willingness to adjust is closely tied to the posture of openness as well as an experimental imagination. In the Delphi 1 survey, one clergy respondent, in describing a willingness for lay leaders to adjust, even went so far to suggest, “Be willing to make decisions that might kill the church.”

Certainly, this kind of posture involves loss—loss of “the way things have always been” in church, loss of control, loss of values and beliefs. Heifitz and Linsky assert that such loss must be acknowledged and grieved, and leaders must pace loss, offering a “holding environment” and “lowering the temperature” of change and adjustment to a rate their followers can absorb. But the authors also assert that it is only by sustaining attention on the threats and challenges facing them and their followers that leaders can move organizations like the church through adaptive challenges. In facing a VUCA future, it is clear that a posture of willingness to adjust will be imperative.

Obviously, a willingness to adjust is something that cannot be created *ex nihilo*, not unlike other postures and imagination named here. However, by cultivating other

postures—of openness, flexibility, humility, hope—and by collaborating with clergy, other lay people, the congregation and community, an openness to adjusting can be fostered and grown.

Imagination Recommendations for Clergy and Lay Leaders

In Chapter 2, imagination was described as the capacity to form new thoughts and picture something that does not currently exist. In theological terms, imagination, as fostered by the Holy Spirit, creates new and different futures for God’s people. The imagination recommendations listed below help develop the capacity to face adaptive challenges and create a new and different future for the church.

Recommendation #6: An Experimental Imagination

An open, flexible posture creates the milieu for imagining beyond what is and allows clergy and lay leaders to foster an experimental imagination. As asserted by Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011):

The key to lasting change [in congregations] is extensive participation by as many people as possible, where they are able over time to try out the new way of being church without risk of shame for failing.... The importance of trial and experimentation must not be underestimated. (164-165)

What clergy and lay leaders can do is provide a “holding space” (Heifitz and Linsky 2002) and a “safe-to-learn environment” (Garvey Berger and Johnston 2015) to create the space for an experimental imagination:

People in safe-to-learn organizations need to stop pretending that they’re working toward some kind of unified plan of what the future will look like....they need to admit that they don’t actually know exactly what the future will look like but they’re going to try like mad to influence the uncertain future anyway. This is a radically different way of talking about leading into the future. (Garvey Berger and Johnston 2015, 53)

This kind of experimental imagination allows for small, low-risk experiments from which leaders increase knowledge and feedback in the face of adaptive challenges.

Though in the Delphi survey a few clergy seemed to downplay an experimental imagination in their comments, lay leaders desired it for both clergy and themselves. They see it as the way forward in partnering with God to create adaptive change. One lay respondent called for elimination of the answer “no” to trying new things. Only experimenting with what does not already exist can new possibilities come into being. As Brueggemann encourages, “The newness from God is the only serious source of energy.... The prophet must not underestimate his or her urgent calling, for the community of faith has no other source of newness” (Brueggemann 2018, 78-79).

Recommendation #7: An Imaginative Trust

The sentiment of imaginative trust was highlighted in the responses from both clergy and lay leaders. It is only by trusting God, who is already creating the future, that we will be able to face the future as leaders. As Brueggemann asserts, it is the very imagination of God that drives the prophet’s imagination to announce and enact a different future (Brueggemann 2018). Thus, clergy and lay leaders must foster their own imagination to partner with God’s imagination in the face of adaptive challenges.

Both clergy and laity also mentioned the need for trusting one another—clergy trusting laity, laity trusting clergy, congregations trusting each other—in order to face an unknown and complex future. Trust is perhaps the most valuable commodity available in a VUCA world and church, for without trust in God and one another, there can be no partnership or support for facing what lies ahead.

Imagination Recommendations for Clergy

Recommendation #8: Discover what is Truly Meaningful

One lay leader in the Delphi 1 survey suggested to clergy: “Imagine a church where you are fed, and then be that church. If you wouldn’t attend your church if you didn’t have to, then why would anyone else?” The baptismal vocation of clergy affirms this kind of imagination. As referred to in Chapter 2, the vocation of clergy necessitates “having capacity to engage people and lead them toward active participation in God’s mission in the world” (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 2016, 24). Since God’s future is already in process, being attentive to this promised future and allowing the Spirit to break open our imagination will open us to what is truly meaningful.

Garvey Berger and Johnston also affirm that we need new habits of mind that stretch and expand us to deal in more thoughtful ways with the complexity the world offers. They assert we must develop new habits of mind by asking different questions, taking multiple perspectives, and seeing systems. They state, “Leadership is about gathering people together—even people with quite different goals and understandings—and helping them build bridges that take everyone to a new place” (Garvey Berger and Johnston 2015, 22).

Imagination Recommendations for Lay Leaders

Recommendation #9: Engagement in Community

This imagination is formed only by listening and attending to others, inside and outside the lay leader’s own congregation. This final recommendation solidifies the need to open up beyond one’s own community, one’s own values, and one’s own imagination

to have the capacity to picture what does not exist—and what can exist—in an unknown future. Garvey Berger and Johnston affirm:

In a simpler world, perhaps unilateral power held by a single, smart, capable leader could rule the day. In a complex world...it takes a collective sharing of power, creativity, and perspectives to become agile and nuanced enough to lead into the uncertain future. (2015, 30-31)

Suggestions for Further Research

This research project has identified for the researcher several additional areas requiring further study:

1. Include all rostered leaders. This research intentionally focused on the posture and imagination necessary for clergy and lay leaders for a future church. However, this research omitted the perspectives of deacons, who, like clergy, are rostered leaders in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The input from deacons would add to the depth of findings and recommendations for leadership in the future church.
2. Address multicultural competence. This researcher understands she researches and writes from a privileged social rank in terms of race, class, ability, religion, sexual orientation, age, heritage, and national origin (Nieto, et. al. 2010). She and all those of privilege must develop a sense of cultural competence that fosters awareness of one's own assumptions and biases, knowledge of culturally diverse populations and the treatment of marginalized groups, skills in working across cultures and communities, and advocacy for those who are marginalized (Hollins and Govan 2015). Relevant to this research, as well as to the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in general, this means listening to and learning from those outside one's own social location, understanding one's own privileged

perspectives, creating space and resources for those with less power to be empowered, and changing policy and practices that benefit some groups over others. As Tod Bolsinger states:

The biggest adaptive change is for the dominant church to embrace that God has already been at work in the Majority World. And the immigrant communities, people of color and women—particularly in our culture—are the folks who are trained for the new world. They’ve lived in this uncharted territory already. (Bolsinger 2018)

The posture of multicultural competence is an additional, and perhaps primary, posture that should be explored and supported in future research.

3. Address practices for cultivating the postures and imagination named here.

Naming the postures and imagination needed for leaders is a crucial first step for informing leadership for the future, but identifying ongoing practices to nurture and foster such postures and imagination is a next and important step for future research and writing.

Conclusion

This chapter offered nine recommendations of postures and imagination needed for clergy and lay leaders for the future Lutheran church in Northwest Washington. The recommendations presented a grounded theory as a result of the data supplied by 11 clergy and eight lay leaders of the Northwest Washington Synod of the ELCA by way of two Delphi surveys. The recommendations were supported by the theological foundations and literature described throughout this project, and recommendations for future research were suggested, as well.

Although this research has focused primarily on the agency of clergy and lay leaders to posture themselves and have a certain type of imagination in order to lead in

the future church, God's promised future is already being created, and God is the primary actor who enables our posturing and imagination. The Holy Spirit is already at work in this volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world. By participating in God's own life, we humans are not passive recipients, but rather the Spirit transforms our posture and imagination to work with God in creating new futures which bring resurrection, hope, and promise to the world.

One might wonder if a doctoral research project was necessary to reach these conclusions and recommendations, given that much of what was discovered has been articulated in various ways in much of the literature referred to in this project. However, what this research did was corroborate "on the ground" what is sometimes only conceptual, thus creating a grounded theory that has true potential for being both utilized and effective since it was created "from the ground up" by clergy, lay leaders, and the researcher themselves. What this study has also uncovered for this researcher, and perhaps for some readers, is that there is no one "solution" for how to face an unknown, uncertain future, but there are postures and imagination that can be fostered which might be the keys to participating with God in leadership in an unknown, uncertain future.

There is comfort in the perspective of Garvey Berger and Johnston regarding leadership in a VUCA world:

There is no getting it right. There are no maps here, no GPS. There are only new landscapes, new information, new opportunities and challenges, and the best leaders are those who are willing to listen well and make subtle changes to collectively recalculate the route again and again. (Garvey Berger and Johnston 2015, 170)

May we clergy and lay leaders keep recalculating the route by how we are postured and how we imagine, that in participating with God we might bring hope and change to a VUCA church and world.

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APPENDIX A

Email to Potential Clergy Delphi 1 Participants

November 15, 2018

Dear Northwest Washington Synod colleague:

In case we have not previously met, I am an ELCA pastor in Ferndale, WA and a DMin student at Seattle University. I am requesting your expertise for my doctoral project on the "posture and imagination" needed for clergy and lay leaders in an unknown future and across diverse ministerial contexts in the Northwest Washington Synod.

Bishop Kirby Unti has given me your name as a clergyperson who has the desire and capacity for adaptive change. I would deeply value your input for my project.

I am asking you to participate in a series of 3-5 Delphi surveys (surveys that build upon previous responses toward the goal of achieving consensus) to offer your perspectives on both how leaders must position themselves for ministry, as well as how they can create new ideas or concepts for ministry, to discern future approaches to leadership for both clergy and lay leaders in our synod.

The results of the first survey will be coded to summarize salient themes from the responses of up to 18 clergy and 18 lay leaders in our synod. Those themes will then be sent to the same clergy and lay leaders to rank how true each theme is for them. The process will be repeated 2-3 additional times to determine core themes around which there is the most consensus.

Each survey may take up to an hour. At the conclusion of the first survey you will be asked to supply the names of four lay leaders in your congregation/ministry (this is called a "snowball" recruiting technique), one of which will be contacted to take the survey, as well. I am curious if clergy and lay leaders hold differing perspectives on what is needed for future leadership. The identity of all respondents, clergy and lay, will remain confidential and anonymous.

If you choose to take the first survey using the link below, you will receive the second survey summarizing the themes from the first survey around the first of the year. Each survey will have a 2-week response period. The deadline for taking this first survey is **Friday, November 30**.

I realize this is a significant commitment, and I sincerely appreciate your consideration. The series of surveys will potentially last into March or April. You are welcome to opt out of the surveys at this or any point (see opt out link below). I will be happy to share my results with you at the conclusion of my project, likely in June 2019.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions, schofie2@seattleu.edu, 360-325-5269.

Follow this link to the Survey:

`{!://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}`

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
`{SurveyURL}`

Many thanks in advance for your help,

Rev. Jana Schofield
Christ Lutheran Church
Ferndale, WA

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
`{OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}`

APPENDIX B

Follow-up Reminders to Clergy

Dear clergy colleague:

If you have not done so already, please consider taking this survey for my doctoral project to help determine the posture and imagination necessary for leaders in our synod for the future. Survey responses are due on **Friday, November 30**.

Follow this link to the Survey:

[\\${1://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${1://SurveyURL}](#)

Please contact me with any questions.

Thank you,

Rev. Jana Schofield

schofie2@seattleu.edu

360-325-5269

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${1://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

APPENDIX C

Email to Potential Lay Delphi 1 Participants

Dear Northwest Washington Synod member:

I appreciate you opening and reading this email in the midst of a busy Advent and Christmas season! I received your name and email address from your pastor; I deeply value your consideration of my request.

I am an ELCA pastor in Ferndale, WA and a Doctor of Ministry student at Seattle University. I am requesting your expertise for my doctoral project on the "posture and imagination" needed for clergy and lay leaders in an unknown future and across diverse ministerial contexts in the Northwest Washington Synod.

Your pastor has given me your name as a lay leader in your congregation who has the desire and capacity for adaptive change. I would deeply value your input for my project.

I am asking you to participate in a series of 3-5 Delphi surveys (surveys that build upon previous responses toward the goal of achieving consensus) to offer your perspectives on how leaders must position themselves for ministry, as well as how they can create new ideas or concepts for ministry, to discern future approaches to leadership for both clergy and lay leaders in our synod.

The results of the first survey will be coded to summarize salient themes from the responses of up to 18 clergy and 18 lay leaders in our synod. Those themes will then be sent to the same clergy and lay leaders to rank how true each theme is for them. The process will be repeated 2-3 additional times to determine core themes around which there is the most consensus. The identity of all respondents, clergy and lay, will remain confidential and anonymous.

Each survey may take up to an hour, but because of the busyness of this season, I welcome your quick thoughts "off-the-top-of-your-head."

If you choose to take the first survey using the link below, you will receive the second survey summarizing the themes from the first survey around the first of the year. Each survey will have a 2-week response period.

The deadline for taking this first survey is **Friday, December 21**. If you believe you will need more time to complete the survey, please contact me at schofie2@seattleu.edu, 360-325-5269. (Unfortunately I will be at Holden Village, and therefore without cell or internet capabilities, until December 15; I will reply to any communication as soon as I'm 'reconnected')! I will send a couple reminders to those who have not completed the survey during the next couple weeks.

I realize this is a significant commitment, and I sincerely appreciate your consideration. The series of surveys will potentially last into March or April. You are welcome to opt out of the surveys at this or any point (see opt out link below). I will be happy to share my results with you at the conclusion of my project, likely in June 2019.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions, schofie2@seattleu.edu, 360-325-5269.

Follow this link to the Survey:

[\\${1://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${1://SurveyURL}](#)

Thank you, and Advent blessings,

Pastor Jana Schofield

Christ Lutheran Church, Ferndale, WA

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${1://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

APPENDIX D

Follow-up Reminders to Lay Leaders

Thank you for your consideration, in the midst of this busy season, to take the survey for my doctoral research on the posture and imagination needed for clergy and lay leaders for the future church. Your pastor recommended you as a lay leader whose input and insight would be very valuable for my research.

I would appreciate your brief responses by **Friday, December 21** (if you need a bit more time, please let me know so I can adjust the timeline).

It would be helpful to know if you are not able/interested in taking the survey so I can pass it on to other lay leaders in your congregation: schofie2@seattleu.edu.

Follow this link to the Survey:

[\\${1://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${1://SurveyURL}](#)

Please contact me with any questions: schofie2@seattleu.edu (or reply to this email).

Advent blessings,

Pastor Jana

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${1://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

APPENDIX E

Delphi 1 Clergy Survey

Seattle University Consent to Participate in Research

As part of my Doctor of Ministry project at Seattle University, I'm inviting you to participate in a research study, "Discerning our Posture and Imagination: A Delphi Study of Leaders in the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." Through a series three to five surveys, I hope to determine the posture and imagination necessary for both clergy and lay leaders in the uncharted future of the Lutheran church in the Northwest.

You were identified by Bishop Kirby Unti as a respected clergy member in our synod who has shown a desire and leadership capacity for adaptive and organizational change. Thus, your participation in the research would be extremely valuable.

Methodology

The study will utilize a Delphi methodology rooted in grounded theory – theory created "from the ground up." The Delphi surveys will seek to achieve consensus around necessary approaches to leadership for the future. Upon your consent to participate in the research, you will be enabled to take the first survey. Then, over the next three months, you will be asked to complete two to four more surveys. Each electronic survey will take up to one hour to complete and will have a two-week response period, and the survey may be started and stopped an unlimited amount of times before submittal.

The first survey will ask open-ended questions about the posture and imagination necessary for both clergy and laity in our synod in the next five years. Each successive survey will summarize the collective anonymous responses of the previous survey and ask you to rank how true each finding is for you. The number of surveys will depend on how close to consensus the findings emerge, and your continued input will help elucidate the research.

Participation

Participation in these surveys is completely voluntary, and you may stop at any time without any consequences. Bishop Unti, who provided your name, will not know whether you participate in the survey or not.

I will collect the following information for the research study: name, email address, ministry context, age range, gender, race, geographical location, and years of leadership experience. This information will be helpful in determining any divergence of consensus based on demographic data.

Confidentiality and Risks

There are no known risks associated with this study. However, whenever you provide information online, your data could be intercepted. I'm using a secure software system called Qualtrics to collect this data, but I can't completely eliminate this risk. To minimize the risk of anyone seeing your data who shouldn't, I will make sure:

- All data will remain confidential.

- All research materials and consent forms will be stored in a private, password encrypted electronic file and OneDrive folder accessible only by me.
- I'll keep any identifying information separate from your research data, but I will be able to link it to you. I'll destroy this link after I finish collecting and analyzing the data.
- Human subjects research regulations require that data be kept for a minimum of three years, but after three years I will destroy all the data.

Only I will have access to the information you provide. If I share the findings in publications or presentations, neither your name nor any identifiers will ever be used. If I quote you, I'll use pseudonyms (fake names). Two volunteers, Dr. Todd Hobart and Rev. Suzanne Thomas, will help me code the data from each survey to ensure accuracy and reliability, but any data to which they have access will have all names and identifiers previously removed.

Benefits

The benefits of the study include gaining potential insight into future approaches of leadership and contributing to individual and collective decision making for clergy and lay leaders in our synod. A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request, beginning likely in June 2019. Please contact me, Jana Schofield, 360-325-5269, schofie2@seattleu.edu.

You will receive no gifts or incentives for this study. Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research, contact me, Jana Schofield, 360-325-5269 / schofie2@seattleu.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the SU Institutional Review Board at 206-296-2585 / irb@seattleu.edu.

Consent

If you meet the eligibility criteria below and would like to participate in this study, choose the answer below "I consent to participate in this research" to begin the survey. Remember, your participation is completely voluntary, and you're free to withdraw at any time.

- I am at least 18 years old
- I am a clergy person in the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Posture

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "posture" as "(1) the position or bearing of the body whether characteristic or assumed for a special purpose...(2) the state or condition at any given time with respect to capability...(3) a conscious mental or outward behavioral attitude." The researcher is interested how all three definitions relate to

leadership in the church: (1) how the body of *church leaders* must be positioned for ministry in the next five years; (2) what state or condition of capability clergy and lay leaders must possess for leading the church in the next five years; and (3) what mental or outward behavioral attitude leaders must hold for leading the church in the next five years.

Think about what these definitions of “posture” in relation to clergy and lay leadership mean for you. Consider, and perhaps even name, the major adaptive challenges (challenges for which there are no quick or technical fixes) for the Lutheran church of the Northwest in general (i.e., declining membership) and in your particular context. Think about your current “posture” of leadership, and brainstorm how leaders could be positioned for ministry in an uncharted future as they face adaptive challenges.

1. What is the posture needed for clergy to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?
2. What is the posture needed for lay leaders to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?

Imagination

Imagination is the capacity to form new thoughts and picture something that does not currently exist. It is the ability to create concepts with which the imaginer does not yet have experience, or which they do not fully understand; “to form a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses” (Perdue 2003). In querying about imagination for this study, the researcher is not necessarily looking for responses outlining specific programs or ideas on leading the church of the future in the Northwest Washington Synod, but rather thoughts about how new ideas or concepts for ministry can be created in the first place.

Think about experiments in ministry you have tried, i.e., how have you “done things outside the box” that aren’t according to the traditionally ordered way of ministry. Think about questions you are asking, the potential perspectives you can be taking, and how you see systems operating in your ministry context. Think about what God is doing and nudging you toward. Think of what is possible amidst ambiguity and uncertainty.

3. What is the imagination needed for clergy to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?
4. What is the imagination needed for lay leaders to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?

Lay leader recruitment

The intent of this research is to ask both clergy and lay leaders the same questions to assess whether there is a difference between how they view their own and others’ leadership posture and imagination.

Please provide the names and email addresses of four members of your congregation or ministry site whom you believe have the desire and leadership capacity for adaptive and organizational change. One of them will be contacted to be invited to participate in this study, as well. (Four names are requested to preserve anonymity of participants. You will not be told if any or which of these lay persons participate in the survey).

Name and email #1

Name and email #2

Name and email #3

Name and email #4

APPENDIX F

Delphi 1 Lay Leader Survey

Seattle University Consent to Participate in Research

As part of my Doctor of Ministry project at Seattle University, I'm inviting you to participate in a research study, "Discerning our Posture and Imagination: A Delphi Study of Leaders in the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." Through a series three to five surveys, I hope to determine the posture and imagination necessary for both clergy and lay leaders in the uncharted future of the Lutheran church in the Northwest.

You were identified by your pastor as a respected lay member in your congregation who has shown a desire and leadership capacity for adaptive and organizational change. Thus, your participation in the research would be extremely valuable.

Methodology

The study will utilize a Delphi methodology rooted in grounded theory – theory created "from the ground up." The Delphi surveys will seek to achieve consensus around necessary approaches to leadership for the future. Upon your consent to participate in the research, you will be enabled to take the first survey. Then, over the next three months, you will be asked to complete two to four more surveys. Each electronic survey will take up to one hour to complete and will have a two-week response period, and the survey may be started and stopped an unlimited amount of times before submittal.

The first survey will ask open-ended questions about the posture and imagination necessary for both clergy and laity in our synod in the next five years. Each successive survey will summarize the collective anonymous responses of the previous survey and ask you to rank how true each finding is for you. The number of surveys will depend on how close to consensus the findings emerge, and your continued input will help elucidate the research.

Participation

Participation in these surveys is completely voluntary, and you may stop at any time without any consequences. Bishop Unti, who provided your name, will not know whether you participate in the survey or not.

I will collect the following information for the research study: name, email address, ministry context, age range, gender, race, geographical location, and years of leadership experience. This information will be helpful in determining any divergence of consensus based on demographic data.

Confidentiality and Risks

There are no known risks associated with this study. However, whenever you provide information online, your data could be intercepted. I'm using a secure software system called Qualtrics to collect this data, but I can't completely eliminate this risk. To minimize the risk of anyone seeing your data who shouldn't, I will make sure:

- All data will remain confidential.

- All research materials and consent forms will be stored in a private, password encrypted electronic file and OneDrive folder accessible only by me.
- I'll keep any identifying information separate from your research data, but I will be able to link it to you. I'll destroy this link after I finish collecting and analyzing the data.
- Human subjects research regulations require that data be kept for a minimum of three years, but after three years I will destroy all the data.

Only I will have access to the information you provide. If I share the findings in publications or presentations, neither your name nor any identifiers will ever be used. If I quote you, I'll use pseudonyms (fake names). Two volunteers, Dr. Todd Hobart and Rev. Suzanne Thomas, will help me code the data from each survey to ensure accuracy and reliability, but any data to which they have access will have all names and identifiers previously removed.

Benefits

The benefits of the study include gaining potential insight into future approaches of leadership and contributing to individual and collective decision making for clergy and lay leaders in our synod. A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request, beginning likely in June 2019. Please contact me, Jana Schofield, 360-325-5269, schofie2@seattleu.edu.

You will receive no gifts or incentives for this study. Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research, contact me, Jana Schofield, 360-325-5269 / schofie2@seattleu.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the SU Institutional Review Board at 206-296-2585 / irb@seattleu.edu.

Consent

If you meet the eligibility criteria below and would like to participate in this study, choose the answer below "I consent to participate in this research" to begin the survey. Remember, your participation is completely voluntary, and you're free to withdraw at any time.

- I am at least 18 years old
- I am a lay person in the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Posture

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "posture" as "(1) the position or bearing of the body whether characteristic or assumed for a special purpose...(2) the state or condition at any given time with respect to capability...(3) a conscious mental or outward behavioral attitude." The researcher is interested how all three definitions relate to

leadership in the church: (1) how the body of *church leaders* must be positioned for ministry in the next five years; (2) what state or condition of capability clergy and lay leaders must possess for leading the church in the next five years; and (3) what mental or outward behavioral attitude leaders must hold for leading the church in the next five years.

Think about what these definitions of “posture” in relation to clergy and lay leadership mean for you. Consider, and perhaps even name, the major adaptive challenges (challenges for which there are no quick or technical fixes) for the Lutheran church of the Northwest in general (i.e., declining membership) and in your particular context. Think about your current “posture” of leadership, and brainstorm how leaders could be positioned for ministry in an uncharted future as they face adaptive challenges.

1. What is the posture needed for clergy to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?
2. What is the posture needed for lay leaders to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?

Imagination

Imagination is the capacity to form new thoughts and picture something that does not currently exist. It is the ability to create concepts with which the imaginer does not yet have experience, or which they do not fully understand; “to form a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses” (Perdue 2003). In querying about imagination for this study, the researcher is not necessarily looking for responses outlining specific programs or ideas on leading the church of the future in the Northwest Washington Synod, but rather thoughts about how new ideas or concepts for ministry can be created in the first place.

Think about experiments in ministry you have tried, i.e., how have you “done things outside the box” that aren’t according to the traditionally ordered way of ministry. Think about questions you are asking, the potential perspectives you can be taking, and how you see systems operating in your ministry context. Think about what God is doing and nudging you toward. Think of what is possible amidst ambiguity and uncertainty.

3. What is the imagination needed for clergy to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?
4. What is the imagination needed for lay leaders to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years?

APPENDIX G

Delphi 2 Clergy Survey

Delphi Survey #2 – CLERGY

Under each question, please rate the importance of each posture or imagination (**in bold**) needed for leadership in a future church. Bullet points under each item are the coded responses from the first survey which led to the named posture or imagination.

1. Please rate the importance of these **postures needed for clergy** to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Important	Less Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important

Humility and Openness

- Be able to adapt to folks who have been raised in the church, others new to the faith, and everyone in between
- Have a spirit of learning; be willing to learn from many sources
- Have a posture of cultural humility
- Be comfortable with change
- Attentive and active listening, including to those not part of the church
- Be generous; share leadership even if choices are different than your own
- Have a sense of humor
- Adapt with creativity in the flow of the Holy Spirit
- Be curious; engage community through curiosity
- Be open in mind and heart, including an openness to others' expertise, critique, and guidance; receive what is shared in a non-defensive manner

Confidence in God's presence and guidance

- Move with grace
- Expect God to be present in an uncertain future
- Be embracing
- Be thankful
- Be enthusiastic for what will be
- Be joyful

Eagerness to take risks in new ways of being church

- Recognize God is involved even when not named
- Be willing to let the church die if that's where God is leading
- Be willing to experiment
- View world and church as one
- Use community-building ideas from the world
- Understand what is at the core of being church, which can be lived out in many ways
- Build relationships and collaborate with as many partners as possible

Invitational leadership

- View other people as children of God, but not to indoctrinate, convince, or convert them
- Be truthful and say hard things
- Follow, model, and teach discipleship
- Nurture and empower the community of faith to engage the world
- Equip servants to join in God's mission
- Build relationships and collaborate with as many partners as possible

Please describe why you chose the ratings you did:

Any additional postures for clergy you would add?

2. Please rate the importance of these **postures needed for lay leaders** to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Important	Less Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important

Willingness to adjust

- Be willing to let go of the way things have always been
- Recognize that "God" does not equal "church"
- Be willing to try new things, experiment, and risk
- Be willing to make decisions that might kill the church
- Be flexible

Humility and Openness

- Learn
- Be curious
- Have an openness to neighbor and community; willingness to engage the neighborhood in which the church is located
- Have gratitude
- Have a posture of listening
- Share
- Have a sense of humor

Collaborative attitude

- Trust the leadership of the congregation, synod, denomination
- Work with rostered leaders to grow capacity for ministry
- Move congregations forward with the Kingdom, not the institution, as the goal
- Work with clergy in an asset-mapping-based servant ministry

Engagement with faith practices

- See faith as integral to all parts of life and life integral to all parts of faith
- Engage in deep Bible study
- Be a disciple committed to the love of God lived out for us in Jesus

- Be the priesthood of all believers as servants so the world will know, live, and join in God's work to mend the entire universe
- Nurture practices that foster God's awareness in our midst
- Engage in an expression of the Catechumenate

*Please describe why you chose the ratings you did:
Any additional postures for lay leaders you would add?*

3. Please rate the importance of the **imagination needed for clergy** to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Important	Less Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important

____ **Freedom from bounds**

- Let go of fear of loss
- Do not be bound by affordability or numbers
- Share power with others in the congregation
- Provide spiritual space for those who claim no faith

____ **Experimental imagination**

- Have imagination of a researcher to be bold, experimental, and methodical
- Partner together to find cures and treatments for the church
- Initiate experiments; be willing to risk, fail, and try again
- Ask new questions individually and with others
- Clarify purposes that invite and welcome imagining
- Asset-based experimentation
- Redefine what a good idea is
- Be open to new possibilities
- Be willing to explore, risk, try new things
- Be willing to learn from experiments
- Invite people into the spiritual activities and reflections out in secular community

____ **Capacity for learning**

- See what the rest of the world is up to
- Clergy must imagine a different vision of themselves in relation to community to have a voice in important issues
- Understand current culture's deepest longings and struggles
- Learn from different perspectives, including those inside and outside the church
- Read or listen to podcasts around spirituality to have a feel for what people are thinking and searching for

____ **Capacity for trust**

- Help community see how God's people broke through their imaginative gridlock by embracing the challenge to leave the familiarity of slavery in Egypt and venture out into the unknown and unpredictable wilderness
- Trust that as God did it before, God will do it again
- Have a biblically-informed imagination that trusts God's covenant promise to bring new life out of our valley of dry bones
- Trust in death and resurrection

Please describe why you chose the ratings you did:

Any additional imagination for clergy you would add?

4. Please rate the importance of the **imagination needed for lay leaders** to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Important	Less Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important

Capacity for trust

- Trust God's promise of new life
- See God as actively present and engaged in the world
- Strengthen hopes by pondering what to hope in

Broad imagination

- Imagine church around people, not church structure
- Provide an assets-mapping approach to congregational life
- Imagine programs that the church may not have offered in the past
- Consider oneself a midwife to embody the purposeful bearing, capacity, and behavioral attitude needed to empower the baptized
- Imagine the church caring for the whole person, not just the "spiritual" side

Biblically-informed imagination

- Build trusting relationships grounded in ongoing conversation with the biblical narrative
- Nurture faith formation in community
- Deep conversation with Word and world
- Develop a form of the Catechumenate

Attention to others

- Engage one's own context
- Listen deeply to understand one another

Please describe why you chose the ratings you did:

Any additional imagination for lay leaders you would add?

APPENDIX H

Delphi 2 Lay Leader Survey

Delphi Survey #2 – LAY

Under each question, please rate the importance of each posture or imagination needed for leadership in a future church.

Bullet points under each item are the coded responses from the first survey which led to the named posture or imagination.

1. Please rate the importance of these **postures needed for clergy** to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Important	Less Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important

Coaching posture

- Serve as mentors for laity
- Lead old and new groups to participate as one faith community
- Help believers ready to do Christ's work
- Help members find place in serving community
- Recruit and motivate volunteers

Adaptability/Flexibility

- Balance new technology, interfaith partnerships, and gender/orientation issues with traditional Lutheran beliefs
- Openness to alternative worship settings
- Listening attitude
- Faith balanced with doubt
- Balancing old and new needs and vision
- Accommodation of unchurched/non-traditional worshippers, while tending to traditional worshippers
- Openness
- Don't let dogma and policy be a block
- Welcoming to different perspectives on how to live out the gospel
- Attitude of welcoming acceptance
- Forming and sharing an inspiring vision of inclusivity

Social justice conscience

- Church-supported advocacy to engage younger generations
- Recognize the educated, activist generations ready to do Christ's work
- Conscience for the homeless
- Volunteer service-based
- Political morality
- Compassion
- Love, live, and teach as Jesus

Hopeful attitude

- Attitude of steadfast hope

- Foolish optimism
- Humility
- Affirming
- Keep vibrant, meaningful worship

Please describe why you chose the ratings you did:

Any additional postures for clergy you would add?

2. Please rate the importance of these **postures needed for lay leaders** to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Important	Less Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important

_____ **Adaptability/Flexibility**

- Faith balanced with doubt
- Comfort with less hierarchy
- Comfort with adaptations to worship styles
- Thinking outside the box to bring in the unchurched
- Be cognizant of others' beliefs and ideals in one faith community
- Discerning inclusive actions

_____ **Responsiveness**

- Hold one another accountable to commitments
- Facilitate healthy conflict
- Be connected and responsive to church members
- Support vision of ministry
- Engage in long-range planning
- Engender trust
- Learn about each other through bridging exercises and service

_____ **Hopeful attitude**

- Prayerful discernment supporting confident action
- Humility
- Foolish optimism

_____ **Social justice conscience**

- Minister to the needs of people left behind by the world
- Compassion
- Serving the least
- Balancing service with nurturing worship and programs
- Political morality

Please describe why you chose the ratings you did:

Any additional postures for lay leaders you would add?

3. Please rate the importance of the **imagination needed for clergy** to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Important	Less Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important

Freedom from bounds

- Openness to new ideas
- Willingness to accept and implement ideas that are not their own
- Openness to new worship music, days, hours
- Not allowing “no”
- Recognize and join other non-church ministry efforts in the community

Discover meaning

- Imagine what feeds you (clergy) and implement that
- Discover what is meaningful to and feeds people
- Express and allow others to shape what is meaningful
- Survey groups inside and outside the church about what is needed and what is wrong with the church
- Encourage a discussion forum of younger people from a variety of faith backgrounds

Experimental imagination

- Vision beyond ministry in the building
- Experiment with little ideas
- Try and fail
- Encourage brainstorming
- Vision to see new service opportunities
- Spirit-driven (fasting, celebration, quiet sabbath) vs. liturgical calendar-driven activities
- Use media through technology to grow faith development

Please describe why you chose the ratings you did:

Any additional imagination for clergy you would add?

4. Please rate the importance of the **imagination needed for lay leaders** to lead the Lutheran church in Northwest Washington in the next five years:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Important	Less Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important

Imagination beyond “what is”

- Advocate for new ideas

- Get change-resistant congregants on board to try new things for the sake of the gospel
- Understand different imaginations sharing the road
- Saying “what if” early and often
- Quit trying to determine right from wrong
- Create “WOW” moments
- Look at new ideas, goals, populations beyond heritage belief systems
- Carefully listen to multiple points of view

A focus on Christ

- Follow the commands of Jesus
- Patiently await the master’s return
- Seek to understand Christ’s will
- Pray for the church
- Be joyful in Christ’s presence

Engagement with community

- Understand non-churched communities
- Vision church as people, not place
- Engage with the community to learn how to reach the marginalized

Please describe why you chose the ratings you did:

Any additional imagination for lay leaders you would add?

APPENDIX I

Institutional Review Board Approval

November 6, 2018

Jana Schofield
School of Theology & Ministry
Seattle University



Dear Jana,

Thank you for completing all required revisions for protocol FY2019-008 "**Discerning our Posture and Imagination: A Delphi Study of Leaders in the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**," now approved until **June 1, 2019**. You may begin your study at any time.

IRB approval expiration for student principal investigators aligns with anticipated graduation dates, and continuing approval depends on registered status at Seattle University. The SU IRB cannot provide oversight for research studies by non-active SU affiliates, such as alumni or unregistered students.

Carefully read the following post-approval policies, for which your faculty adviser is jointly responsible to ensure that you follow. Always use the most updated forms on our [website](#).

- If you want to make any changes to the protocol during the course of the study, including an extension due to a later graduation date, you must submit an **IRB Modification Request** before implementing the change. You may not initiate any modifications without written IRB approval.
- If you conclude data *collection* and will no longer work with or contact participants (i.e., data analysis stage only), you may submit a **Downgrade to Exempt** request, eliminating the requirement for further IRB oversight.
- If you do not request a downgrade, then before graduation or at least a week before approval expires (**June 1, 2019**), you must submit an **IRB Closeout Report**, so we can officially close the protocol to remain in compliance with Federal and SU human subjects protections policies. In the report you will clarify what will happen to any identifiable data (e.g., will be retained/stored by faculty adviser) as described in the approved protocol.
- Finally, if for any reason, you should not continue working on the project, please notify the IRB immediately, so we can mark the protocol as withdrawn.

Sincerely,

Andrea McDowell, PhD, IRB Administrator